

Ver. 4. *And before this,*] That is, before this Separation was made.

Eliashib the Priest,] There were several of this Name in those Times, and some of them Priests, *Ezra* x. 6, 24, 26, 37. But this seems to have been the High Priest, mentioned *Chap.* iii. 1. for his Family was much corrupted, as appears from *Ver.* 28. of this Chapter.

Having the Oversight of the Chamber of the House of our God,] Here the singular Number is used for the plural; for he had not the Oversight of one Chamber only, but of all the Chambers, as the following *Ver.* 5, 9. shew. But this may seem to indicate, that *Eliashib* was not High Priest, it being below him to be set over the Chamber, (as the Phrase is in the Hebrew,) though the High Priest, no doubt, had an Inspection over them all.

Was allied unto Tobiah:] An *Ammonite*, as he is often called in this Book; with whom he ought to have contracted no Affinity by suffering his Grandson to marry with *Sanballat's* Daughter; who was the fast Friend of *Tobiah*, and the great Enemy of the *Jews*. We read also in *Ezra* x. 18. that several of the Priests had married strange Wives; and among the rest, some of the Sons of the High Priest are there mentioned.

Ver. 5. *And he had prepared for him a great Chamber,*] By breaking down the Partitions, it is likely, between several little Chambers, where holy Things were laid, he prepared one great Room for his Reception.

Where aforetime they laid the Meat-Offerings, the Frankincense, and the Vessels, and the Tithes of the Corn, the new Wine, and the Oil, (which was commanded to be given to the Levites, and the Singers, and the Porters,) and the Offerings of the Priests.] All the Offerings that belonged to the Ministers of God, (and the Vessels wherewith they ministered,) which there had been great Care taken should be brought into these Chambers, (the latter End of *Chap.* x.) were now all profanely thrown out to make Room for this Man.

Ver. 6. *But in all this Time was not I at Jerusalem:*] They took this Boldness in *Nehemiah's* Absence; and were the more audacious, because many of the Nobles of *Judah* (it is likely) favoured this *Tobiah*, and were his Friends, as they had been heretofore, *Chap.* vi. 17, 18.

For in the two and thirtieth Year of Artaxerxes King of Babylon, came I unto the King,] He was Governor twelve Years in this Province; but did not continue all that Time in *Judea*: For he sometimes stept to *Babylon*, to give an Account of his Management to the King; who, it is likely, (as I before observed,) would not dispense with so long an Absence from his Attendance to his Office at Court. See upon *Chap.* ii. 6. v. 41.

And after certain Days,] In the Hebrew the Words are *at the End of Days*, that is, at the End of the Year. For so the Word *Jamim* [Days] often signifies in Scripture. *Exod.* xiii. 10. *Levit.* xxv. 29. See below, *Ver.* 15.

Obtained I Leave of the King:] To return to *Jerusalem*: From whence, it is probable, he heard of the fore-named Disorders, and there-

fore once more begged Leave to go thither, that he might redress them.

Ver. 7. *And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the Evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah,*] He was fully informed what Evil had been committed, before he went about to reform it.

In preparing him a Chamber in the Courts of the House of God.] In the Court of the *Israelites*, which was a sacred Place, into which no Stranger might enter.

Ver. 8. *And it grieved me sore; therefore I cast forth all the Household-Stuff of Tobiah out of the Chamber.*] His Indignation was raised, as well as his Sorrow, to see such a Profanation: First, in bringing a Stranger into the Place where only *Israelites* were to come; and he an *Ammonite*, one of the worst of the strange Nations, and a greater Enemy of the *Jews*, than many of the *Ammonites*; for whose sake he had removed the holy Things, and put *Tobiah* in their Place, who brought his Household-Stuff along with him; and all this done by the High Priest, who ought to have opposed such an Attempt, and, indeed, was the only Man that could have hindred it, till *Nehemiah* came, whose Authority, as Governor under the King of *Persia*, was superior to his; by which he threw all his Goods out of the Chamber, and forced him also to depart. Here is no Mention of his reprehending *Eliashib*; which is an Argument, that he died after *Nehemiah* went from *Jerusalem*.

Ver. 9. *Then I commanded, and they cleansed the Chambers; and thither brought I again the Vessels of the House of God, with the Meat-Offering and the Frankincense.*] He gave Order, that the Chambers, which had been thus profaned, should be restored to their former Sanctity by the Water of Purification, mentioned in the nineteenth of *Numbers*; whereby Things, as well as Persons, were cleansed from their Impurities. And when the Chambers were thus prepared, he brought in again all the Vessels, and other Things, (mentioned *Ver.* 5.) which had been thrown out to make Room for *Tobiah*.

Ver. 10. *And I perceived, that the Portions of the Levites had not been given them:*] For either the People did not pay them well, when they saw they were not laid up for their proper Use in the Place appointed, or *Eliashib* employed them for the Entertainment of *Tobiah*; which he might as well do, as bring him into the sacred Place. Into which when they were not brought, the People not knowing what became of them, might keep them to themselves. See *Bishop Montague of Tithes*, p. 347.

For the Levites and the Singers that did the Work, were fled every one to his Field.] This made those that attended the Service at *Jerusalem* forsake the City, and betake themselves to their Country Concerns; where they might make Provision for the Sustenance of their Families. And, indeed, it is a great Artifice of the Devil, as *Wolpius* here observes, by his Instruments to defraud the Ministers of Religion of their necessary Maintenance, that he may thereby abolish Religion itself.

Ver. 11. *Then contended I with the Rulers, and said,*]

said,] He earnestly expostulated with them, and reproved them.

Why is the House of God forsaken?] There was no Account to be given of it, but the Negligence of the Magistrates; whom he awakens to their Duty, by representing to them, that God himself was highly affronted, by having none of his Servants to attend him at his House.

And I gathered them together,] He recalled the Levites to Jerusalem out of the Country; whither they were fled, to look after their own Estates.

And set them in their Place,] Every one to his proper Work and Business.

Ver. 12. *Then brought all Judah the Tithe of the Corn and the new Wine, and the Oil, unto the Treasuries.*] When they saw these Things were likely to go the right Way, and be employed to their proper Uses, they brought them to their proper Place. For the People (as *Conradus Pellicanus* here notes) readily obey, if the Magistrates and the Priests be not remiss in their Duty.

Ver. 13. *And I made Treasurers over the Treasuries, Sbelemiah the Priest, and Zadock the Scribe, and, of the Levites, Pedaiab; and next to them was Hanan the Son of Zaccur, the Son of Mattaniah; for they were counted faithful, and their Office was to distribute unto their Brethren.*] There had been some appointed heretofore unto this Office, (*Chap. x. 44, &c.*) but they not performing their Trust, *Nehemiah* sought out some Persons, here mentioned, who had the general Reputation of being Men of Integrity; whose Business it was to give every one of their Brethren their Portion.

Ver. 14. *Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good Deeds that I have done for the House of my God, and for the Offices thereof.*] It is very natural here to observe, that to make Provision for the Maintenance of God's Ministers, and of his Worship and Service, is a Work of high Esteem with God. For these are the good Deeds (as appears by the foregoing Verses) for which *Nehemiah* recommends himself to the Divine Favour and Remembrance. And therefore what shall we think of the Times wherein we live; when Men account them the most Religious to God-ward, who would unfurnish the House of God most, and who most rob his Priests? This is the Reflection, which *Mr. Mede* made upon these Words of *Nehemiah*, Book I. Discourse 34.

Ver. 15. *In those Days saw I in Judah some treading Wine-Presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in Sheaves, and lading Asses; as also Wine, Grapes, and Figs, and all Manner of Burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath-Day:*] The treading Wine-Presses, shews that he came back in the latter End of the Year, (as I have explained in the End of Days, Ver. 6.) when he found them carrying in Sheaves and Wine, and all Manner of Burdens, (that is, doing all Manner of Work,) on the Sabbath, as if it had been a common Day.

And I testified against them in the Day wherein they sold Victuals.] Or, as *Pellicanus* translates it, *I contested with them, that they should sell Provi-*

sions on such Days as they might be sold, and not on the Sabbath.

Ver. 16. *There dwelt Men of Tyre also therein, which brought Fish, and all Manner of Ware,*] The City of Tyre was a Place of great Trade, and, lying on the Sea, abounded with Fish, which they brought from thence to Joppa, and so to Jerusalem. Tyre was nigh to Sidon, which had its Name (as *Justin* saith, *Lib. xviii.*) *ab Ubertate Piscium*, from Plenty of Fish.

And sold on the Sabbath unto the Children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.] Not only in the Country, but in the holy City, as Jerusalem was called; where holy Assemblies were to be held, and God worshipped solemnly on the Sabbath.

Ver. 17. *Then I contended with the Nobles of Judah,*] As I had done before, Ver. 11. for they who did not correct Abuses when it was in their Power, were more in fault than they that committed them.

And said unto them, What evil Thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath-Day?] For if they had exercised their Authority, the People durst not have done as they did.

Ver. 18. *Did not your Fathers thus? and did not our God bring all this Evil upon us, and upon this City?*] He bids them reflect and consider, that this was one of the Crimes of which their Fathers were guilty; for which God suffered them to be carried Captive out of their Land, and their City to be destroyed. See *Jerem. xvii. 19, 20, 21, &c.*

Yet ye bring more Wrath upon Israel, by profaning the Sabbath.] This aggravated their Guilt, that they would not beware of those Sins which had been their Ruin; and would bring greater Judgments upon them, because they were not amended by what they had suffered.

Ver. 19. *And it came to pass, that when the Gates of Jerusalem began to be dark,*] That is, when they who sat there could not see to do any Thing, which was about Sun-setting; the Mountains about Jerusalem intercepting the Light there sooner than in other Places.

Before the Sabbath,] In the Evening of that Day.

I commanded, that the Gates should be shut, and charged, that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath; and some of my Servants set I at the Gates, that there should no Burden be brought in on the Sabbath-Day.] It seems, he could not trust to the common Porters of the Gates; and therefore appointed some of his own Family, who he knew would neither be careless, nor corrupted, to see the Gates were kept shut, and all Traffick hindered.

Ver. 20. *So the Merchants and Sellers of all kind of Ware,*] Who came from Tyre and other Places, Ver. 16.

Lodged without Jerusalem once or twice.] In the open Fields, (as appears by the next Verse,) where perhaps they pitched their Tents, and opened their Packs, hoping to sell their Wares on the Sabbath to the Country People, though they could not get Admittance into Jerusalem.

Ver. 21. *Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the Wall?*] He

He solemnly declared to them, and called God to witness, that he would not suffer them to lodge there any more.

If ye do so again, I will lay Hands on you.] Seize their Persons and their Goods, and punish them as Offenders.

From that Time forth came they no more on the Sabbath.] Such Power have good Magistrates; especially, when they are resolute. And it is very observable, that these being Men of other Nations, were not bound by the Law of the Sabbath, and did not transgress in breaking it; yet he would not permit them to make the *Jews*, who were under the Obligation of the Law, to break it; and thereby trouble the Commonwealth of *Israel*, by drawing the People into Sin. It is also observable, that tho' Buying and Selling was not a servile Work, yet he thought this comprehended in those Words, *Thou shalt do no Manner of Work.*

Ver. 22. *And I commanded the Levites, that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the Gates, to sanctify the Sabbath-Day.]* He thought the *Levites* would be more revered than his Servants; and therefore appointed them to this Office of keeping the Gates on the Sabbath-Day, that it might not fail to be sanctified as it ought to be: And they being also on that Day to attend upon other Offices which were holy, he commanded them also to cleanse themselves by some known Purification, which might procure them the greater Reverence. There was another Reason why he joined the *Levites* with his Servants, to look after the Gates on the Sabbath-Day, because he would have this Watch continued, when he and his Servants were gone from *Jerusalem*, till this evil Custom was quite broken.

Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the Greatness of thy Mercy.] He had beseeched God to remember his good Deeds, ver. 14. but to shew that he did not think there was any proper Merit or Worthiness in them, which required a Reward, as a Debt in Justice due unto them, he here explains himself, and desires to be rewarded, or rather pardoned out of God's free Goodness, according to *the Greatness* or *the Multitude* of his Mercies.

Ver. 23. *In those Days also saw I Jews that had married Wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab:]* They had at this very Time married Strangers, as *Pellicanus* thinks; and by what *Nehemiah* did for their Correction, one would think some were again revolted into that Sin, which they had most solemnly renounced both before him and before *Ezra*, ch. x. 30. *Ezra* x. So hard it is to root out Tares, which will be continually sprouting up again.

Ver. 24. *And their Children spake half in the Speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews Language, but according to the Language of each People.]* Whom they had married. For their Mothers, with whom they were bred, spake to them in the Language of their own Country, and not in the Language of the *Jews*; which it seems by this was very different from that of *Ashdod*, tho' they were Neighbours to the *Philistines*. And so was the Language of the *E-*

gyptians, and other Countries thereabout, very different, as *Bochartus* observes in his *Canaan*, Lib. ii. Cap. 1. See *Scaliger*, de *Emend. Temp.* Lib. vi. p. 580. But there doth not seem to have been such Difference between the Language of the *Canaanites* and the *Hebrews* in the Time of *Abraham*; for he made Use of no Interpreters, that we read of, in his Conversation with them: Yet it is probable, that by Length of Time these People had altered their Language very much, which was preserved pure among the *Jews*.

Ver. 25. *And I contended with them, and cursed them,]* He expostulated with them, and denounced God's Judgment against them; or, as *Aben Ezra* thinks, he excommunicated them, and cast them out of the Society of God's People. But that was in use only when they could not punish Offenders according to their Law, which now they had Power to do; and accordingly it follows, that he did inflict Punishments upon them.

And smote certain of them,] Ordered the Officers to beat some of the most notorious Offenders; either with Rods, or with Scourges, according to *Deut.* xxv. 2.

And pluck'd off their Hair,] Which was a great Disgrace in those Eastern Countries. See *Isa.* l. 6. *Jerem.* xlviii. 37. the Hair being esteemed a great Ornament, and a Token one was a Freeman: Therefore plucking off the Hair was a putting them to Shame, and making them look like vile Slaves.

And made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your Daughters unto their Sons, nor take their Daughters unto your Sons, or for yourselves.] He also took an Oath of them that they would reform: But this he had done before, chap. x. 29, 30. and therefore since the most sacred Promises of Amendment did not keep them fast to God, he also severely chastised them in the Manner before related, that nothing might be wanting to make them better.

Ver. 26. *Did not Solomon King of Israel sin by these Things?] He argued also with them, and persuaded them to amend, from the Example of the greatest Men, who had been undone by such Marriages, particularly King Solomon.*

Yet among many Nations was there no King like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him King over all Israel: nevertheless, even him did outlandish Women cause to sin.] As much as to say, If such a Man as he, who excelled all Men in Wisdom, and was so highly in God's Favour, that he preferred him before all his Brethren, to be King over all *Israel*, was not safe from Seducement by strange Women, how shall ye be able to preserve yourselves from their Inticements?

Ver. 27. *Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great Evil, to transgress against our God, in marrying strange Wives?] That is, would you have me connive at this Wickedness, and so bring Guilt upon my self, and Ruin upon you?*

Ver. 28. *And one of the Sons of Joiada, the Son of Eliashib the High Priest,]* It is supposed that *Eliashib* died before *Nehemiah* returned from *Persia*, and *Joiada* his Son succeeded him, one

of whose Sons had offended in this Matter. He was his Grandson.

Was the Son-in-Law to Sanballat the Horonite:] He is said by *Josephus* to be that *Manasseh*, who by *Sanballat's* Interest procured Leave to build a Temple in Mount *Gerizim*, to which all the *Jews* that had married strange Wives resorted, (Lib. xi. Cap. 8.) and as *Solomon Virga* saith, in *Schebet Judah*, he made Proclamation in all the Countries round about, that whosoever would come to his Temple, they should pay neither First-Fruits nor Tithes, but only make voluntary Offerings; by which he gained many of the poor Sort to him. See *Selden*, Lib. ii. *de Synedr.* Cap. 15. p. 623.

Therefore I chased him from me.] That he should not serve at the Altar; which *Josephus* will have to be decreed by the great *Sanhedrim*, who, if he would have before them renounced that unlawful Wife, and put her away, offered to continue him in the Exercise of his Priesthood. See *Selden*, *de Succession. in Pontif.* Lib. ii. Cap. 6. and Lib. ii. *de Synedr.* Cap. 15. p. 649. where he observes, that *Solomon Virga* saith, he was put out of his Ministry at the Temple by an Assembly of all the Priests, who met together and expelled him. But there was no Need of their Authority, for *Nehemiah* himself chased him from him, that is, banished him from *Judea*, as *Bertram* expounds this Phrase, in his *de Repub. Jud.* Cap. 13. p. 165, &c.

Ver. 29. *Remember them, O my God,]* To punish them, (that is, according to their Deserts) as he desired God to remember him by rewarding him for the Good he had done. But *Rashi* takes it for a Prayer to God, to reform them, and render them Good for Evil.

Because they have defiled the Priesthood,] God required greater Purity in the Priests than in other *Israelites*, and in the High Priests especially, who might marry none but a Virgin of his own People. See *Leviticus* xxi. 6, 7. unto ver. 16.

And the Covenant of the Priesthood, and of the Levites.] There was a Covenant made with *Phineas* (*Numb.* xxv.) of an everlasting Priesthood, which they had violated, because the Covenant was mutual, binding them to observe

the Laws of the Priesthood, as God engaged himself to preserve them in their Office. What Covenant was made with the *Levites* I do not find; but I suppose the Meaning is, they dishonoured the whole Tribe of *Levi*, who were set apart for divine Ministries: For it is likely, some of the *Levites* had transgressed in this Matter, by the bad Example of the Priests: This great Corruption of the Priests seems to have been the Occasion of God's sending *Malachi*, the last of the Prophets, to correct it, after *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* had not been able to root out this Corruption. And the Covenant here mentioned, was that made in the twentieth of *Artaxerxes*, wherein they engaged to put away their strange Wives. Thus Dr. *Alix*, whose Judgment I prefer to my own, in this Point.

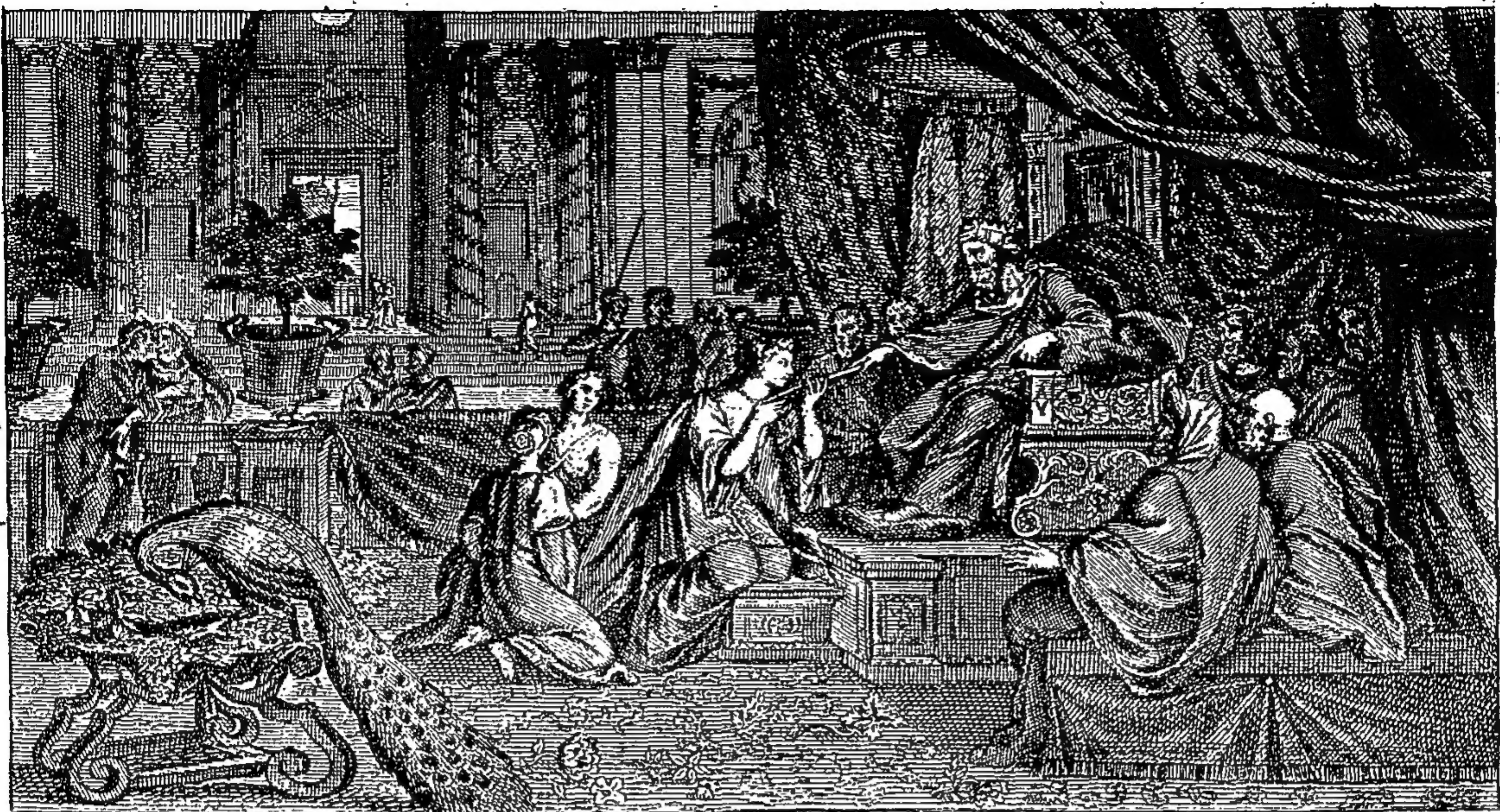
Ver. 30. *Thus cleansed I them from all Strangers,]* That is, both Priests and *Levites* were separated from their strange Wives.

And appointed the Wards of the Priests and the Levites, every one in his Business:] To observe their Courses of Attendance at the House of God, and every one to perform there that Business which was proper to him.

Ver. 31. *And for the Wood-offering, at Times appointed, and for the First-fruits.]* He commanded them to observe the Decrees which had been passed some Time ago, chap. x. 34, 35. *Maimonides*, in his Treatise of the Manner of offering Sacrifices, Cap. 14. gathers from these Words, that it was lawful for any Man, freely to vow either Wine, or Frankincense, or Oil, or Wood, to burn on the Altar: For this, saith he, was a Kind of Sacrifice or Offering, as *Nehemiah* here informs us.

Remember me, O my God, for Good.] He concludes his Book with a short Prayer to God, wherein he commends himself, and all he had done, unto God's gracious Acceptance: As it becomes all Men, especially those who are employed in Divine Things, if they have done any Thing that is good, to remember it was by God's Help and Assistance, not by their own Power; beseeching the Father of Mercies, by his only-begotten Son, to make it serviceable to his Church, and his own Good. Thus *Job. Wolphius* concludes his Commentary upon this Book.





A

COMMENTARY

UPON THE

BOOK

OF

ESTHER.

THERE is a great Variety of Opinions concerning the Author of this Book, whom a great Number of late Interpreters, and some of the Hebrew Doctors, take to have been *Mordecai*; which is the common Opinion of the *Latins*, and of *Clemens Alexandrinus* among the *Greeks*; which, they think, is sufficiently warranted by those Words in the *Ninth Chapter*, *ver. 20, &c.* where it is said, *Mordecai wrote all these Things, and sent Letters unto the Jews, &c.* This, they think, relates to this whole History, which he wrote as it is recorded in this Book: But those Words plainly relate only to the Decree of observing the Feast of *Purim* perpetually; which supposes they had been acquainted with the Occasion and Ground of it, before those Letters came, as *Huetius* observes; who therefore is of the same Opinion with the *Talmudists* in *Baba Bathra*, that this Book was written by the Men of the great Synagogue:

Which Opinion he the rather embraces, (tho' I see no Ground at all for it,) because it comprehends theirs who think *Mordecai* was the Author, and theirs who ascribe it to *Ezra*, and theirs who think it was *Joachim* the Son of *Jeshua* the High-Priest; for all these might well have been in that Synagogue. Whoever was the Author, *Maimonides* saith (in his *More Nevachim*, Par. II. Cap. 45.) their wise Men openly declare, *the Book of Esther was dictated by the Holy Ghost*, that is, as he explains it, by a Motion or Impulse (as he calls it) from the Spirit of God, who excited him to write this History; as by the same Motion others indited *Psalms*, and gave wholesome Precepts, to regulate the Lives of Men. See *Chap. x. 3.*

And that this History fell out after the Captivity of *Babylon* was ended, and after the Time of *Darius the Mede*, is very evident: For *Sushan* was not the Royal City of the *Medes*, but of the *Persians*. Nor had the *Medes* so large

a Dominion, as from *India* to *Ethiopia*. But in what Reign of the *Persian* King these Things fell out, is hard to determine. See the last Verse of this Book.

C H A P. I.

Ver. 1. **N**OW it came to pass in the Days of *Abasuerus*] This was a *Persian*, but which of them, is a great Doubt; for learned Men think several of them had this Name. There are, I think, eight several Opinions about him here mentioned. Our great Primate *Usher* takes him to have been *Darius Hystaspis*; but he married the Daughter of the Great *Cyrus*, to confirm himself in his Kingdom, and would not have so easily parted with her as *Abasuerus* did with *Vashti*. The great *Scaliger* therefore thinks him to have been his Successor *Xerxes*; whose Wife's Name being *Amystris*, he takes her for *Esther*, this Name being in the *Persian* Language *Häm-Esther*. But this hath been confuted by many learned Men, particularly by *Jacobus Capellus*; who observes, that this *Amystris* was the Daughter of a powerful Man among the *Persians*, whom *Herodotus* calls *Otanes*. Several other Reasons he gives against this in his *Historia sacra & exotica*, ad A. M. 3640, and 3650. Where by good Arguments he proves it was not *Artaxerxes Longimanus*, nor *Darius Notus*, nor *Artaxerxes Mnemon*, but concludes, that it was the next King, *Ochus*, which agrees well with his *Persian* Name, which was *Achasch*, to which *Verosch* being added as his Surname, he was called by the *Persians* *Achasch-Verosch*, which the *Greeks* translated *Abasuerus*.

(This is *Abasuerus* which reigned from *India* even unto *Ethiopia*, over an hundred and seven and twenty Provinces)] We are told by *Herodotus*, that *Darius* conquered *India*, (*Lib. IV. Cap. 44.*) And there might well be so many Provinces between that and *Ethiopia*, whether we understand thereby the Country beyond *Egypt*, or that near *Arabia*. *Herodotus* seems to direct us to the former, when he saith, That *Darius* found by his Conquests, that *Asia*, in the Eastern Part of the World, was like to *Libya*.

Ver. 2. That in those Days, when the King *Abasuerus* sat on the Throne of his Kingdom,] Enjoying Peace and Quietness throughout his large Dominions. Some think, this Phrase, when he sat on the Throne of his Kingdom, signifies when he began to reign. But this is confuted by Ver. 3. which saith, in the third Year of his Reign he did what follows.

Which was in *Shushan* the Palace,] This was a noble City, which *Strabo* calls Πόλιν ἀξιολογοῦσάν, a most famous and highly-to-be-praised City; where *Cyrus* and the *Persian* Kings, after the Conquest of the *Medes*, (whose Country was remote,) settled their Royal Seat, that they might not be far from *Babylon*. The Country about it also was wonderful fruitful, producing an hundred, and sometimes two hundred fold, as he writes, *Lib. XV. p. 727* and *731*. It was built, as *Pliny* saith, by *Darius*; *Lib. VI. Cap. 27*. Or rather enlarged,

by building there a most magnificent Palace, as *Ælian* explains it, *Lib. XIII. de Animal. Cap. 59.* which *Aristotle* in his Book *de Mundo* calls θαυμάσιον βασιλείου οἴκον, a wonderful Royal Palace, shining with Gold, and Amber, and Ivory.

Ver. 3. In the third Year of his Reign he made a Feast unto all his Princes and his Servants;] By his Servants are meant his Subjects; who were called Servants in the Eastern Countries. And it was the Manner of the *Roman* Emperors sometimes to feast all the People of *Rome*, as well as the Senate.

The Power of *Persia* and *Media*,] And first he speaks of the Feast made for the great Men, whom he calls the Power of *Media* and *Persia*, Men in Power, as we now speak.

The Nobles and Princes of the Provinces being before him.] He explains who they were; the Governors of Provinces, and other noble Persons, who were all then at his Court. The Word *Parthemim*, which we translate Nobles, some would have to be the Corruption of the *Greek* Word παράτιμος, honourable Persons; and *Junius*, with others, deduce it from the *Greek* Word πρῶτος. But the *Greeks* were not yet got among them; and therefore it is a *Persian* Word, signifying Governors, as *R. Solomon* expounds it: And *Joseph Kimchi* thinks they were such great Men as governed that Tract of Land that lay upon the River *Phrath*, that is, *Euphrates*. But *Hottinger* will have it to be a compound Word from *Par*, which signifies High, and *Ram*, which signifies Spirit; as much as to say High-spirited, or Heroick Persons: Which seems to me to be but an ingenious Conceit.

What the Occasion of this Feast was, is variously conjectured. Some think, it was begun on his Birth-day. The *Targum* saith, a great Rebellion had been lately suppressed, which filled him with Joy. But the next Words seem to inform us, that it was to shew his magnificent Greatness to all his Subjects. For in those Countries they delighted much in making great Feasts; as we read afterward, that *Alexander* (when he was there,) entertained τετρακοσίς ἡγεμόνας, four hundred Captains, or great Commanders, who all sat in Silver Chairs, &c. as *Duris* tells us in *Athenæus*, *Lib. I. Deipnosoph. Cap. 14.*

Ver. 4. When he shewed the Riches of his glorious Kingdom, and the Honour of his excellent Majesty many Days, even an hundred and fourscore Days.] Which was for the Space of six Months; from the Vernal to the Autumnal Æquinox; which is an hundred fourscore and seven Days. For *Vashti* kept a Feast of seven Days, at the End of his Feast, for the Women of *Susa*, as *Ochus* did for the Men, Ver. 7, 10. Thus *Jacobus Capellus*. Some indeed will have it, that he was thus long in making Preparation for this splendid Entertainment, which did not last many Days. But this Custom is continued still to this Day, of keeping an Annual Festival an hundred and eighty Days, if we may give Credit to *Dr. Fryar*, who lived lately in this Country, and gives us an Account of it in his Travels, *Letter V. Cap. 12. p. 348.*

Ver.

Ver. 5. *And when these Days were expired, the King made a Feast unto all the People that were present in Shushan the Palace; both unto great and small, seven Days,]* Not only to the Inhabitants of Shushan, but to all that were present in the City, out of all Parts of his Dominions, the *Israelites* not excepted, as the *Targum* saith.

In the Court of the Garden of the Kings Palace,] In the Entrance of the Royal Palace; which was very spacious, and planted with all Sorts of Fruit-Trees, and Aromaticks, as the *Targum* explains it.

Ver. 6. *Where were white, green, and blue Hangings, fastened with Cords of fine Linen and Purple to Silver Rings, and Pillars of Marble:]* How the *Targum* came to fancy that these Hangings, being spread from one Tree to another, were tied to them with silken Purple Strings, I know not; for the Text saith expressly, they were hanged on Pillars of Marble, set up, no doubt, for that Purpose.

The Beds were of Gold and Silver,] On which they sat, or rather lay at their Meat. The Beds themselves were of *Melitim*, (as *Jonathan* expresses it,) of the softest Wool, that is, the *Milesian*, which is the best in the World, as *Bochartus* hath observed out of many Authors, in his *Pheleg*, Lib. I. Cap. 8. But the Bedsteads were of Gold and Silver, that is, studded with Gold and Silver, or overlaid with Plates of them, as the Manner was, *Dietericus* shews in his *Antiq. Biblicæ*, p. 388.

Upon a Pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black Marble.] In the Hebrew, upon a Pavement of *Babat*, and *Ses*, and *Dar*, and *Sochereth*; which signify several Sorts of Stones, as *Bochartus* hath proved beyond Contradiction: But what Stones are here meant is not easy to resolve, nor is it of much Moment to know. He hath spent a large Chapter to prove that *Dar* signifies a Pearl; which, though very precious, it is not incredible was used in this *Persian* Luxury, among other Stones, to adorn this Pavement: Which he justifies by many good Arguments; and shews, there are Examples of such Profuseness in other Histories, *Hiero-zoicon*, Par. II. Lib. V. Cap. 8. *Drusius* also hath said a great deal about *Sochereth*, to which I refer the learned Reader, *Miscellanea*, Cent. I. Cap. 74.

Ver. 7. *And they gave them Drink in Vessels of Gold, (the Vessels being diverse one from another,) and Royal Wine in Abundance, according to the State of the King.]* There was great Variety of Wines, it is likely, as well as great Plenty; and great Variety of Vessels to drink in, different from all that they had seen. So *Drusius* translates those Words in the Parenthesis, *Variantia diversa Vasa*, as the Jews are said, Chap. iii. 8. to have Laws different from all other People, where there is the same Word: *Miscellanea*, Cent. I. Cap. 16. *Strabo* saith, these Princes were so luxurious, that they had their Wine from Syria, called *Chalybomium*; and the Water they drank with it, from *Euleus*, it being *παιντων ελαφροτατον* the lightest of all other Waters.

Ver. 8. *And the Drinking was according to*

the Law, none did compel:] The plainest Translation seems to be, *the Drinking according to Custom, none did compel*. It was customary to compel Men to drink more than they had a mind to do; but this Prince left every Man to his Liberty, that no Man should incur any Displeasure, if he did not drink what others would impose upon him. But *Drusius* thinks the Word *Dath* never signifies a Custom.

For so the King had appointed to all the Officers of his House, that they should do according to every Man's Pleasure.] Which made the Feast most acceptable, when every one drank for his own Pleasure, and not for other Mens. And such had been the Custom of the ancient *Persians*, who (as *Xenophon* tells us) were very sparing in eating and drinking, though in his Time they were grown extremely riotous. But nothing was more barbarous, than their pressing Men to drink beyond their Inclinations; which the Son of *Syrach* expresses by the Word *Σλι-Gen*, *Ecclus.* xxxi. 37. it being no less inhuman to force a Man to drink when he is not thirsty, than to deny him Drink when he is ready to perish with Thirst: According to an ancient Saying of *Sophocles* in *Athenæus*, Lib. X. *Τὸ πρὸς βίαν πίνειν, ἴσον κακὸν τὸ ἀψᾶν βίᾳ*. To compel a Man to drink by Force, is as bad as to compel him to endure Thirst for want of Drink.

Ver. 9. *Also Vashti the Queen made a Feast for the Women,]* I have before said it is not likely (as *Primate Usher* thinks) that this was *Atossa* the Daughter of *Cyrus*, whom *Darius Hystaspis* married: For the Reason of that Match being to strengthen himself in the Kingdom, he would not have so lightly parted with her. *Jacobus Capellus* thinks, by the Addition of the Word *PAR* to her Name she was called by the *Persians* *Par-Vashti*, which by the *Greeks* is pronounced *Parysatis*, the Mother of *Artaxerxes Mnemon*. But she could not be the Wife of *Ochus*, who was his Son.

In the Royal House, which belonged to King Abasuerus.] Where she entertained the Wives of the Princes, and other Women; not in the open Air, as the Men were, but more privately, as was fit for Women, who were not wont to eat together with Men.

Ver. 10. *On the seventh Day,]* Which was in the Conclusion of this Feast.

When the Heart of the King was merry with Wine,] Which made him a little forget himself, and not consider what became both his own State and that of the Queen.

He commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Herbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven Chamberlains that served in the Presence of Abasuerus the King,] These Eunuchs (as the Word is translated in the Margin,) were Men of principal Authority in the Court; where they had great Offices about the King. And therefore he did her Honour enough, in sending so many of them to wait upon her, and let her know his Pleasure.

Ver. 11. *To bring Vashti the Queen before the King, with the Crown Royal, to shew the People and the Princes her Beauty: for she was fair*

to look on.] It is a very absurd Conceit of the former Targum, who saith, he commanded her to be brought quite naked, that her comely Proportions might be seen, as well as her Face. And yet in *Pirke Eliezer* they are so bold as to say, it was the Custom of the Persian Kings to have their Wives publicly dance before them naked. It was too much, she thought, that he should expose her Countenance to be beheld, especially by all the People: Which was contrary to the Custom of that Country; where they kept their Wives very close, from the Sight of all Men, but themselves.

Ver. 12. *But the Queen Vashti refused to come at the Kings Commandment by his Chamberlains:*] Which she might do out of Modesty, not Pride: Because, as I said, it was contrary to the Custom; and the great Men, inflamed with Wine, might be provoked by her Beauty (as *Jacobus Capellus* speaks) to lust after her.

Therefore was the King very wroth, and his Anger burned in him.] It was the more immoderate, because his Blood was heated with Wine; which made his Passion too strong for his Reason: Otherwise he would not have thought it decent for the Queen, nor safe for himself, to have her Beauty (which was very great) exposed in this unusual Manner. *Josephus* saith, he was the more enraged, because he sent more than once to her, but still she refused to come: Which is not probable; for though it would have become him to send again to know her Reason for refusing, yet he persisting in his Command, one would think she would have yielded Obedience.

Ver. 13. *Then the King said to the wise Men which knew the Times*] What had been done in former Days; or, what was fit to be done on all Occasions: Men well versed in ancient Histories, (as *Vitrunga* explains it,) and in the Laws and Customs of their Countries; who were able to give Counsel in all dubious and perplexed Cases, such as this was, which rarely happened. *De Synag. Veteri, Par. II. Lib. I. Cap. 8.*

(For so was the Kings Manner towards all that knew Law and Judgment:)] It was his constant Practice; and he did not forget this laudable Custom, even in his Drink, to consult with his Counsellors before he resolved any Thing; who were skilled in the Laws of their Country, and could judge what Advice was to be given in all Cases.

Ver. 14. *And the next unto him was Carshena, Sether, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven Princes of Persia and Media,*] These are called the Kings seven Counsellors, in *Ezra vii. 14.* who took their Original from *Daniel*, who being in great Power under *Darius the Mede*, and having a great Hand in framing the Government of that State, caused the Persian Court (as Mr. *Mede* conjectures) to resemble that of Heaven, ordaining seven chief Princes to stand before the King, as seven great Angels are said in Scripture to stand before the Throne of God. See *Book I. Discourse 10.*

Which saw the Kings Face,] Who were his

principal Ministers, and admitted into his Presence; which was not allowed to every one, but only to the great Men of the Kingdom. See *Grotius* upon *Matth. xviii. 10.*

And which sat the first in the Kingdom.)] Next to the King; being his Royal Judges, who determined what was right among the Persians, and were the Interpreters of the Laws of the Country. Of whom *Herodotus* makes mention, *Lib. III. Cap. 14, 31.* and *Plutarch* in *Artaxerxes*, as *Primate Usher* observes.

Ver. 15. *What shall we do unto the Queen Vashti, according to the Law, because she hath not performed the Commandment of King Abasuerus by the Chamberlains?*] These Words make it plain, that the forenamed great Persons were the supreme Judges what was Law; and that the King did not govern arbitrarily, by his own Will and Pleasure, but by the Laws of the Kingdom.

Ver. 16. *And Memucan answered before the King and the Princes,*] He is the last of the seven Princes, mentioned *ver. 14.* which inclines me to think, that the Puny Judge, as we now spake, delivered his Opinion first, (as they do here,) and so they spake in Order till they came to the first. And thus I find the latter Targum takes it, *He was the least of them, and therefore gave his Opinion first.* But others take it quite contrary, that *Memucan* was the President of the Council, or the King asked him first, what he thought of the Matter.

Vashti the Queen hath not done wrong to the King only, but also to all the Princes, and to all the People that are in all the Provinces of the King Abasuerus.] He declared it to be a Crime of such a dangerous Nature, that it would have a mischievous Influence upon the whole Kingdom, if it were not severely punished.

Ver. 17. *For this Deed of the Queen shall come abroad unto all Women,*] This Transgression of the King's Commandment (as *Maimonides* explains it, in *More Nevoch. Par. I. Cap. 23.*) will be known every where; for it could not be concealed, being a publick Affront to his Majesty.

So that they shall despise their Husbands in their Eyes, when it shall be reported, the King Abasuerus commanded Vashti the Queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.] His Opinion was, that then they would take upon them to disobey their Husbands, and slight their Commands, when they heard what *Vashti* had done, and was not punished for it.

Ver. 18. *Likewise shall the Ladies of Persia and Media say this Day unto all the Kings Princes, which have heard of the Deed of the Queen.*] He repeats it again, that it would have this Effect immediately, especially on the great Women, who from this Time forward would take Example by the Queen, and say to their Lords, Are you more honourable than *Abasuerus* the King, whose Wife would not come when she was sent for? So the latter Targum.

Thus

Thus shall there arise too much Contempt and Wrath.] Contempt in the Wives, and Wrath in their Husbands; which would make great Brawlings and Contentions in all Families.

Ver. 19. *If it please the King, let there go a Royal Commandment from him, and let it be written among the Laws of the Persians and the Medes,]* He would not have a mere Order given, but a Law made, which, as it follows, should stand inviolable. The same Targum saith, that *Memucan* had married a Wife, who being richer than himself, was very proud, and would not speak to him but in her own Language; and now he took this Opportunity to be revenged of her, and make her do whatever he pleased.

That it be not altered,] This was cunningly done, saith the same Targum; for if she had recovered the King's Favour, when his Anger was over, this Counsel might have cost him his Head: But what made Laws unalterable among them, is uncertain. The Targum saith, because the King confirmed it by an Oath, and then it became immutable. Or, it was sealed, not only by the King, but by all the Princes, as one would guess from *Dan. vi. 8, 12, 15.*

That Vashti come no more before King Abasuerus, and let the King give her Royal Estate unto another that is better than she.] This was a very rigorous Decree. But *Drusius* observes, that the *Persians* were inclined to be severe to their Wives.

Ver. 20. *And when the Kings Decree which he shall make, shall be published throughout all his Empire (for it is great) all the Wives shall give to their Husbands Honour, both to Great and Small.]* For none would dare to disobey, when they heard that the Greatness of the Queen could not preserve her from such an heavy Punishment.

Ver. 21. *And the Saying pleased the King and the Princes; and the King did according to the Word of Memucan:]* With whom all the other six Judges concurred in their Opinion.

Ver. 22. *For he sent Letters into all the Kings Provinces, into every Province according to the Writing thereof, and to every People after their Language,]* The Meaning seems to be, that this Decree was published in every Province, after the Manner that such Things used to be proclaimed, and in their own Tongue, that every one, Women as well as Men, might understand it.

That every Man should bear Rule in his own House, and that it should be published according to the Language of every People.] The Decree runs thus in the Hebrew, *That every Man should bear Rule in his own House, and speak in the Language of his People.* It seems the *Persians* had yielded so much to their Wives, that when they had married a Stranger, they suffered her to bring her own Language into the Family. But this Decree altered that Custom, and allowed no other Language to be spoken in the Family but that of the Man, and of the People among whom he lived. See *de Dieu.* And thus the former Targum, *Every Man shall rule in his own House, and compel his Wife to speak*

in the Language of her Husband, and in the Language of his People: Which indeed was a Token of Dominion; all Conquerors endeavouring to bring in their own Language into the Country which they have conquered. The latter Targum hath only these Words, that, *Every Man shall be honoured in his own House, and speak according to the Language of his People;* that is, give his Commands in his own Language, which every one was bound to learn.

C H A P. II.

Ver. 1. *A*fter these Things, when the Wrath of King Abasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.] When his Anger was abated, and the Wine gone out of his Head, his ancient Love began to revive to Vashti, whose Beauty was exceeding charming; but then he remembered withal her undutiful Behaviour, and the Decree he had passed against her, which was irrevocable, so that he was in a great Strait. Yet the latter Targum saith he called for the seven Princes, who had given him the forenamed Counsel, and said unto them; I am no longer angry at Vashti, but at you, who, from what I said in my Drink, took Occasion to destroy her; and thereupon commanded them all to be slain: For which there is no Ground; but by what follows it appears to be a Fable.

Ver. 2. *Then said the Kings Servants, that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young Virgins sought for the King.]* The same Servants, in all Likelihood, mentioned, ver. 14. of the foregoing Chapter, who continually attended him. And when they saw him afflicted, contrived by a new Love to blot out the Remembrance of the old.

Ver. 3. *And let the King appoint Officers in all the Provinces of his Kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young Virgins unto Shushan the Palace,]* The better to divert him, they propound that a great Number of the most beautiful Virgins that could be found, should be brought from all Parts to Shushan, that out of them he might take his Choice, which of them he would make his Queen.

To the House of the Women,] Or, rather of the Virgins; for the House of those who were Women or Wives, was different from this, and under another Governor, ver. 14.

Unto the Custody of Hege the Kings Chamberlain, Keeper of the Women,] Of the Virgins, as *Sbaasbgaz* was of the Women or Concubines, ver. 14.

And let their Things for Purification be given them:] In this House, saith the former Targum, there was a Place for Bathing, and they were furnished with Ointments and Perfumes, and all other Things necessary either for Ornament or Cleanliness; for the Hebrew Word signifies both.

Ver. 4. *And let the Maiden which pleaseth the King, be Queen in Stead of Vashti.* And the

the Thing pleased the King, and he did so.] He approved of the Advice, and gave Order about it.

Ver. 5. *Now in Shushan the Palace, there was a certain Jew, whose Name was Mordecai,]* Who is thought by some to have come to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel, (because one of that Name is mentioned in his Company,) but returned back again to Babylon, being one of the King's Servants; for he was one of his Guard, or Keeper of the Door, or, as we translate it, he sat in the King's Gate, ver. 19, 21. But this was another Mordecai, as appears from the Time wherein he lived, in the latter End of the Persian Empire.

The Son of Jair, the Son of Shimei, the Son of Kish, a Benjamite:] The latter Targum here gives his Pedigree down from Benjamin, the Son of Jacob; but mixed with such Fables, that no Credit can be given to it.

Ver. 6. *Who had been carried away from Jerusalem, with the Captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah King of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon had carried away.]* Mordecai was not then carried away, but Kish, who is mentioned just before, from whom Mordecai was descended. See our Rainoldus, *Cens. Lib. Apocryph. Prælect.* cxlvi. And Bonfrerius also hath well observed (in his Appendix to his *Præloquium* to his Commentaries on the Scripture, Cap. 7.) if he himself was then brought from Jerusalem, he must be at least an hundred and ten Years old (supposing this History to have fallen out in the Time of Darius Hystaspis) when he came into the Place of Haman; for from the Captivity of Jeconiah, till their Deliverance from Captivity, was eighty one Years; and from thence to the Reign of Darius Hystaspis, was almost twenty Years, as Eusebius saith; and Haman was hanged in the twelfth Year of this King; so here are an hundred and ten Years: But it is not credible, that a Man of such a great Age should be advanced to such Authority as he had; and more incredible that Esther, who was his Cousin German, should be beloved of Abasuerus when she was an old Maid, as she must have been, if Mordecai was of these Years.

Ver. 7. *And he brought up Hadassah, (that is Esther) his Uncles Daughter,]* Her Jewish Name was Hadassah, signifying in Chaldee, a Myrtle, as the former Targum saith; but her Persian Name was Esther, which he fancies was from the Greek Word Ἄσπερ, a Star. But the other Targum derives it from Satar, which signifies hidden, because she was hidden in Mordecai's House a long Time, and no Man saw her but he; or rather, because her Nation was concealed, and not known. Primate Usher thinks, that as Vashti was Atossa, so Esther was she whom the Heathens called Artystona; who, as Herodotus saith, was the Wife Darius loved above all other, and had her Statue made of pure Gold, *Lib. iii. Cap. 88.* and *Lib. vii. Cap. 69.* He saith, indeed, that she also was another Daughter of Cyrus, and Sister to Atossa; but he was either ignorant (as that great Man thinks) of the Persian Genealogies, or out of

Envy concealed their Original: It is more likely he gives a true Account of her Descent, as he doth of other Things, and she was not Esther.

For she had neither Father nor Mother,] Her Father died, saith the former Targum, when her Mother was big with Child of her, and her Mother died as soon as she was brought to Bed.

And the Maid was fair and beautiful, whom Mordecai (when her Father and Mother were dead) took for his own Daughter.] The Vulgar translates it, adopted her for his Daughter: Which doth not signify such an Adoption as among the Romans, (as Mr. Selden observes) but only paternal Love and Care to bring up a Child who had lost her Parents; for the Hebrew Doctors are so far from acknowledging any Adoption, that they say he took her to make her his Wife. So Jarchi, by Bat [Daughter,] understands Beth an House; which the LXX follow, he educated her εἰς γυναῖκα, to be his Wife, *Lib. de Success. Cap. 4. p. 18.*

Ver. 8. *So it came to pass, when the Kings Commandment, and his Decree was heard, and when many Maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the Palace, to the Custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the Kings House, to the Custody of Hegai, Keeper of the Women.]* The Words which we translate was brought, may be translated was taken, and that by Force, as the Word sometimes signifies, and as the former Targum here explains it, she was brought by Violence. The latter Targum tells the Manner of it at large, That Mordecai hearing of this Order, hid his Cousin in a private Place where the Officers could not find her. But when the Virgins were gathered together, and Esther was missing, whom all the Neighbours knew to be a very great Beauty, they procured an Order from the King to Mordecai, that upon Pain of Death he should produce her; which he did. But perhaps I take too much Notice of these Jewish Fables.

Ver. 9. *And the Maiden pleased him, and she obtained Kindness of him,]* That is, Hegai, who was much taken with her Countenance, and her Mien, and her sweet Disposition, (it is likely) and all other Things which he thought would make her acceptable to the King.

And he speedily gave her her Things for Purification,] That she might be fit before the usual Time to go in unto the King, that is, in a Year's Time, as some understand it, v. 12, 16.

With such Things as belong to her,] For her Clothes and Diet, which the former Targum makes to be very sumptuous.

And seven Maidens,] One for every Day of the Week, saith the same Targum, whose Names he gives us, and the Days of the Week on which they waited.

Which were meet to be given her, out of the Kings House,] Persons of Quality, fit to attend her.

And he preferred her and her Maids unto the best Place of the House of the Women.] And did her so much Honour, that he assigned her and her Maids the best Apartment in the House of the Virgins.

Ver.

Ver. 10. *Esther had not shewed her People nor her Kindred, for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it.*] Lest she should be contemned, and looked upon as no better than a Slave.

Ver. 11. *And Mordecai walked every Day before the Court of the Womens House, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.*] He might walk there without being suspected, because he belonged to the Court, and was a Man of Condition; for those that were carried away in Jeconiah's Captivity (as his Ancestors were,) were of the better Sort, 2 Kings xxiv. 14, &c. Dan. i. 4. And Esther might find Means by some of those that attended her, to let him know the State of her Health, and of her Affairs.

Ver. 12. *Now when every Maid's Turn was come, to go in to King Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve Months,*] They were kept close so long, that the King might be sure he should not be imposed upon by a Child begotten by another Man. And besides, it was suitable to the State of the King to have them wait a great while, before they were brought into his Company. And another Reason here follows. Herodotus explains the first Words, Lib. III. Cap. 69. where he saith, the Persian Women go in to their Husbands ἐν περιτροπῇ, in a Circle, by Turns.

For so were the Days of their Purification accomplish'd, to wit, six Months with Oil of Myrrh, and six Months with sweet Odours,] It is observed by Pliny, Lib. XIII. Cap. 1. that Ointments were first invented by the Persians: Which were very necessary in so hot a Country, where Men and Women are apt to sweat much, and so smell rankly, without great Care to keep themselves clean and sweet. For which Purpose the Oil of Myrrh was much used, being very fragrant, and apt also to make the Skin soft and smooth, and to cleanse it from Scurf. The sweet Odour served to the same Use, to take away all ill Scents, and, as some think, to make the Body more vigorous.

There are many Authors (as Fortunatus Scacchus observes) who take the Word *Mor* to signify not *Myrrh*, but that fragrant Herb which we call *Marum*, or, as some think, *Marjoram*, from which excellent Oils were drawn, Lib. I. Myrothecium, Cap. 50. But he takes it, as we do, for *Myrrh*; from whence not only a noble Oil was drawn, but being beat to a Powder, such a Fumigation was made with it, as was offered unto their Gods. Whence Athenæus blames Alexander's Arrogance, for suffering Σμύρνα, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα θυμιάματα, Myrrh and other sweet Odours to be offered to him, Lib. XII. Cap. 8.

Six Months] This was a long Time, which was set (first with that Oil, and as many more with sweet Odours) for their Purification: Or rather for their Absterfion or Cleansing, as the same Scacchus observes: For there were no such Purifications here used, as were among the Jews; but it is a known Thing, that as Women in all Countries were wont to spend a great deal of Time in their dressing, and trimming up of themselves, that they might appear well

abroad; so much more in this Country, and when they were to go to the Bed of a great King. A Year indeed was a long Time; but Athenæus saith, that among the Sybarites (who were a delicate luxurious People) there was a Sanction, That the Women, when they were called to the publick Sacrifices at great Festivals, πρὸ ἐνιαυτὸν τὴν παρασκευὴν ποιεῖσαι, were to make Preparation for it a Year before.

And with other Things for the Purifying of the Women.] Whatsoever was proper for this Purpose, was used in their Preparations for the King's Bed.

Ver. 13. *Then thus came every Maiden unto the King; whatsoever she desired was given her, to go with her out of the House of the Women, unto the King's House.*] Whatsoever Ornaments or Attendants she desired.

Ver. 14. *In the Evening she went, and on the Morrow she returned into the second House of the Women, to the Custody of Shasbgar, the King's Chamberlain, which kept the Concubines:*] She returned no more into the former House, having lost her Virginity; but was treated in another House, as one of the King's Wives: For so Concubines were, of a secondary Sort, as I have often noted.

She came in unto the King no more, except the King delighted in her, and that she were called by Name.] For every one's Name was register'd, as the Targum saith, and the Night, I suppose, when she went in unto the King.

Ver. 15. *Now when the Turn of Esther, the Daughter of Abigail, the Uncle of Mordecai (who had taken her for his Daughter) was come to go in unto the King, she required nothing,*] But was contented with her own natural Beauty, and desired nothing of Art to recommend her.

But what Hegai the King's Chamberlain, the Keeper of the Women appointed:] Yet she did not refuse what he, who had been so kind to her, ordered for her.

And Esther obtained Favour in the Sight of all them that looked upon her.] All that beheld her, as she passed from the House of the Women to the King's House, admired her Beauty, which needed no Ornament; for the greatest Ornaments of Virgins are Modesty, (as Pellicanus speaks,) Silence, well-disciplined Eyes, a serene Countenance without Levity, an Horror of all Wantonness; which meeting all in her, made her acceptable to every one that saw her.

Ver. 16. *So Esther was taken unto King Ahasuerus, into his House Royal,*] She was not sent back in the Morning unto the second House of the Women, as the rest were; but the King kept her in his own House, intending to make her more than a Concubine.

In the tenth Month (which is the Month Tebeth) in the seventh Year of his Reign.] He made the great Feast we read of in the foregoing Chapter, in the third Year of his Reign, in the End of which Vashti was sent away. How it came to pass that it was so long before Esther was advanced to succeed her, seems difficult to resolve: But we are to consider, that a great deal of Time was spent in gathering the Virgins together, and that she was a Year in preparing herself for Admission to the King;

and several, it is likely, went in before her, who had also their Time of Preparation; and took some Time, it is likely, to try how he liked her Wit, Humour, and Conversation.

Ver. 17. *And the King loved Esther above all the Women, and she obtained Grace and Favour in his Sight more than all the Virgins; so that he set the Royal Crown upon her Head, and made her Queen in the stead of Vashti.*] She being at this Time, as *Jacobus Capellus* computes, twenty Years old, *ad A. M. 3645*. But some make a Question whether she did not commit a great Sin to come at this Dignity, not considering the Custom of those Times, and Countries. For those Persons whom the King took into his Bed after the Manner before mentioned, were not Harlots, but became his Wives of a lower Sort; for whom he provided ever after, and they were no longer chargeable to their Parents or Friends; nor might any other Man marry them. Such an one *Esther* would have been, if he had not liked her so well as to do more for her. Which no doubt was ordered by a special Providence of God, who thus rewarded her Virtue, and also preserved the whole Nation of the *Jews* from perishing.

Ver. 18. *Then the King made a great Feast unto all his Princes and his Servants, even Esther's Feast,*] So it was called, because it was made in Honour of her, and, if we may believe *Josephus*, lasted a whole Month.

And he made a Release to the Provinces,] At this Feast he gave the People some Ease in their Imposts, and forgave them some of the Duties they were bound to pay him. Some have affirmed, that this is reported by *Herodotus* to have been a Custom of the *Persian* Kings at their Marriages. But I can find no more than this in him, that *ὁ κατισάμενος Βασιλεὺς*, &c. when he was made King, he remitted the Tribute that was due to him from all the Cities, *Lib. VI. Cap. 59*.

And gave Gifts according to the State of the King.] He made great Presents to the Queen, as the Manner of the *Persian* Kings was; who gave to their Queen at their Marriage such a City to buy them Cloaths, such an one for their Hair, another for their Necklaces, and other Ornaments, and so for the rest of their Expences. Here the *latter Targum* tells an idle Tale, how the King desired *Esther* to tell him what Country she was of, and who were her Ancestors from whom she descended. To which she answered, that her Parents dying when she was an Infant, she did not know who were her Forefathers: Which the King hearing, he released all Men of their Taxes, and gave them Gifts, saying, I will be kind to all People of all Nations, because I will be sure to be kind to the People of *Esther*, who are among some of them.

Ver. 19. *And when the Virgins were gathered together the second Time, when Mordecai sat in the King's Gate.*] This doth not signify that there was another Inquisition for Virgins after *Esther* was married, but to join this History with what follows, he repeats what was said before, *Ver. 2*. that at the Time when this second Collection of Virgins was made for the

Choice of a new Wife, as there had been once before when *Vashti* was married, then *Mordecai* was in Attendance at the Gate of the Palace; and so proceeds to shew how he discovered a Plot against the Life of the King.

Ver. 20. *Esther had not yet shewed her Kindred, nor her People, as Mordecai had charged her:*] Which he would not have her to discover, lest she should be hated for her Nation's sake, or her Nation be envied for her good Fortune.

For Esther did the Commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.] A rare Example of Virtue, that she should be so observant of him when she was a Queen; for most forget what they were, when they are unexpectedly grown very great.

Ver. 21. *In those Days (while Mordecai sat in the King's Gate) two of the King's Chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the Door, were wroth, and sought to lay Hand on the King Abasuerus.*] These were two great Men, who perhaps kept the Door of the King's Bed-Chamber, and were incensed at the Divorce of *Vashti*, (whose Creatures they were,) or at the Advancement of *Esther*, knowing her to be related to *Mordecai*, who they were afraid would be raised to greater Power than themselves. Thus the former *Targum* writes, *Doth not the Queen by her Power with the King intend to turn us out of our Places, and put in Mordecai?* Therefore they resolved to poison him, as both that and the *latter Targum* understand it.

Ver. 22. *And the Thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the Queen, and Esther certified the King thereof in Mordecai's Name.*] One of their Servants, whose Name (as *Josephus* saith) was *Barnabazus*, discovered the Conspiracy to *Mordecai*, who found Means to inform *Esther* of it, and she acquainted the King with it from *Mordecai*.

Ver. 23. *And when Inquisition was made of the Matter, it was found out;*] His Information which he gave to the King appeared to be true, upon a due Enquiry into the Matter.

Therefore they were both hanged on a Tree: and it was written in the Book of the Chronicles before the King.] In the Day-Book, wherein all memorable Things were recorded, to be read (as the *Targum* observes) before the King, when he required. Here we may see the Infelicity and the Danger of the most potent Persons: The Life of a great King depending upon the Fidelity of one single Person, whose Service was neglected by the Court, though a Memorial was made of it. Thus all Masters of Families are obnoxious to the Perfidiousness of their Servants that wait upon them. They are the Words of *Conradus Pellicanus*.

C H A P. III.

Ver. 1. **A**FTER these Things] About five Years after, as appears from *Ver. 7*.

Did King Abasuerus promote Haman the Son of Hammedatha the Agagite,] He was descended from the Royal Race of the *Amalekite* Kings, and grown into great Favour in this Court, as *Daniel* and his Companions, who were of noble Blood

Blood also, *Dan. i. 3.* The latter Targum hath given us the Pedigree of Haman, up to Eliphaz the eldest Son of Esau.

And advanced him, and set his Seat above all the Princes that were with him.] Either of his own, or other Nations. For it is likely the Persian Kings, as the Chaldees before them, had many Kings and Princes, whom they had conquered, with them, who had the Honour sometimes, to sit on Royal Seats before them, *2 Kings xxv. 28.*

Ver. 2. And all the King's Servants that were in the King's Gate, bowed and revered Haman; for the King had so commanded concerning him:] To bow the Knee or the Body to all great Persons, was a common Respect; for which there needed not a particular Command to require this of every Body with respect to Haman, since no doubt they did it to all Princes, and would much more do it to him, who took Place of them all, and was the Prince's Favourite. There was therefore some kind of divine Honour intended in this; such as was paid to the Persian Kings themselves, to whom the Greeks would not pay this sort of Respect, because it was accounted divine. And the Word Reverence imports something beyond Bowing, which was falling flat upon their Faces to the Ground. Such Prostrations the Kings of Persia expected: And Abasuerus, to express his great Affection to Haman, would have it paid to him. The former Targum I believe thought of this, when he saith, *They in the King's Gate bowed down to his Image which he had set up, and worshipped Haman.*

But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him Reverence.] Because he was of a Nation, devoted by God to Destruction, with whom therefore the Jews would have no Friendship, nor shew them any Kindness, but remember the Injuries they had done them, *Deut. xxv. 18, 19.* But this doth not seem a Reason weighty enough, why he should not pay him civil Respect, which was given to all Men in great Place, especially since by denying it he might expose his whole Nation to Danger. This is an Argument that there was something more intended: And accordingly the Author of the Apocryphal Additions to this Book understood it, who represents Mordecai praying after this Manner: *Thou knowest, O LORD, that it is not Contumacy, nor Pride, nor Desire of Vain-glory, that makes me not worship Haman; for I would willingly kiss his Feet, for the Safety of Israel: But I do it, that I may not prefer the Glory of a Man to the Glory of God; nor adore any one but thee my LORD alone.*

Ver. 3. Then the King's Servants which were in the King's Gate said unto Mordecai, Why transgresses thou the King's Commandment?] I suppose it seemed strange to them, that one single Person should refuse to do what every Body did, especially since thereby he disobeyed the King: Therefore they expostulated with him, to make him sensible of his Duty and his Danger.

Ver. 4. Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them,] Seemed not to regard what they said, and perhaps gave them no Answer.

That they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai his Matters would stand:] Whether he would persist in his Stiffness, and what would be the Issue of it.

For he had told them he was a Jew.] Being much pressed by them, he confesses the Reason why he could not do as they did. For that they might not think it was Pride or Sullenness that made him not comply with the King's Order, he acquaints them plainly of what Religion and what Nation he was; who might not shew any Respect to an Amalekite, (as some take it,) or worship any but God alone, as I take the Meaning to be. And thus the latter Targum here explains it: When they asked him why he did not obey the King he answered, *What is the Son of Man, that he should exalt himself? What is he that is born of a Woman, who comes lamenting into the World, and is of few Days, and then returns to his Earth, that I should worship him? No, I worship God, the living God, who endures for ever, &c.* And so he goes on, describing very well the glorious Majesty of God, the LORD of Heaven and Earth, and thus concludes, *He is to be praised by us, and before him we ought to bow down our selves.*

Ver. 5. And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him Reverence, then was Haman full of Wrath.] It is likely he did not mind what every one did that was in the King's Gate, (where there was a great Crowd,) till he was told of Mordecai's Neglect; and then he marked him when he next passed by, and was highly enraged at him.

Ver. 6. And he thought scorn to lay Hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the People of Mordecai: Wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole Kingdom of King Abasuerus, even the People of Mordecai.] He disdained to take so poor a Revenge, as to rid himself of one Man alone, but resolved to make the whole Nation suffer, who he knew were Enemies to that Nation from whence he sprung.

Ver. 7. In the first Month (that is, the Month Nisan) in the twelfth Year of King Abasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the Lot, before Haman, from Day to Day, and from Month to Month, to the twelfth Month, that is the Month Adar.] It was the Manner of the Eastern Country, by casting Lots into an Urn, to enquire what Days would be fortunate, and what not, to undertake any Business in: According to which Superstition Haman endeavoured to find what Time in the Year was most favourable to the Jews, and what most unlucky. And first he enquired what Month was most unfortunate, and found the Month Adar, which was the last Month in the Year, answerable to our February. For, as Guil. Schickard observes, there was no Festival Solemnity in this Month, nor was it sanctified by any peculiar Rites. And then he enquired the Day, and found the thirteenth Day was not auspicious to them, *Ver. 13.* Some think there were as many Lots, as there were Days in the Year, and for every Day he drew a Lot; but found none to his Mind, till he came to the last Month of all, and to the Middle

Middle of it. See *Hottinger's Smegma Orientale*, p. 75. Now this whole Business was governed by a wonderful Providence of God; by whom these Lots were directed, and not by the *Persian* Gods, to fall in the last Month of the Year; whereby almost a whole Year intervened between the Design and its Execution, and gave Time for *Mordecai* to acquaint *Esther* with it, and for her to intercede with the King, for the revoking or suspending his Decree, and disappointing the Conspiracy.

Ver. 8. *And Haman said unto King Abasuerus,*] Or rather, *had said*: For it is not likely he would cast his Lots till he knew his Mind, for Fear he should lose his Labour.

There is a certain People scattered abroad, and dispersed among the People in all the Provinces of thy Kingdom,] For a great Number of them, being well settled in the Land of their Captivity, would not return to *Judea* when *Cyrus* gave them Leave; whom *Haman* represents as a despicable People, or Vagrants and Stragglers (as the *latter Targum* understands it) dispersed here and there up and down in his Dominions.

And their Laws are diverse from all People, neither keep they the King's Laws;] A proud high-spirited People, (as the same *Targum* represents the Sense,) who live by Laws of their own, and will observe none of the King's; for they will neither eat of our Meat, nor drink of our Wine, nor keep our Festivals; but have several of their own, on which they will not work, nor do the King's Business. All which he sets forth at large in that Paraphrase.

Therefore it is not for the King's Profit to suffer them.] The former *Targum* thus glosses upon these Words, *The King gets nothing by them, while they live in this Kingdom; but what will he not get if he destroys them all?* The other *Targum* makes him represent them as griping Usurers; which was to the Damage of the King's People.

Ver. 9. *If it please the King, let it be written that they may be destroyed:*] He desires not only a verbal Command, but an Order in Writing, for their utter Extirpation as a pestilent People.

And I will pay ten thousand Talents of Silver,] He promises to compensate the Loss of the Tribute which they paid yearly by a vast Sum of Money, which he would pay immediately. But he intended not to pay one Farthing of it himself, it being easy to raise it out of the Spoil of the *Jews* Goods, Ver. 13.

To the Hands of those that have the Charge of the Business,] Not of those who had the Charge to kill them, but of those that received the King's Money; as appears by the next Words, *to bring it into the King's Treasuries*. And so the same *Targum*, *I will pay it into the Hands of those who coin the King's Money*, that is, into the Mint, as we now speak.

Ver. 10. *And the King took his Ring from his Hand, and gave it unto Haman the Son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews Enemy.*] Without any Examination into the Condition of the

People, he consented to their Destruction. So loth are Men that love their Pleasure, to take any Pains to distinguish between Truth and Falshood.

Ver. 11. *And the King said unto Haman, The Silver is given unto thee, the People also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.*] He gave him Power to draw up what Decree he pleased, and seal it with his own Ring; but as for the Money, he loved him so much, he would have none of it.

Ver. 12. *Then were the King's Scribes called,*] As there were sacred Scribes among the *Jews*, who were Men learned in the Law, so there were political both among them and other Nations, as *L'Empereur* observes upon *Bertram De Repub. Jud.* p. 381. And there were two sorts of them; one of which was employed in writing publick Letters or Contracts, and other Acts that were to be signed by Authority, the more honourable and highest of which were such as are called here the *King's Scribes*, whom the *Chaldee* calls the *King's Notaries*, and we now call *Secretaries of State*.

On the thirteenth Day of the first Month,] This was not wisely projected, to let his Design be known so long before it was to take Effect; for the King's Mind might alter, or the *Jews* might find some Way to deliver themselves, or might steal out of the Kingdom.

And there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the King's Lieutenants, and to the Governors that were over every Province, and to the Rulers of every People of every Province, according to the Writing thereof, and to every People after their Language; in the Name of King Abasuerus was it written, and sealed with the King's Ring.] He himself indited the Decree by the Royal Authority, and made it, no doubt, as strict as it was possible; and perhaps commanded it to be executed under great Penalties, by all Manner of Officers, who were required to take care to see it done. And that none might be ignorant, it was written in the Language of every People, and in the Character they could read.

Ver. 13. *And the Letters were sent by Posts into all the King's Provinces,*] Concerning these Posts which were in Use among the *Persians*, see *Herodotus, Lib. VIII. Cap. 98.* where describing the Dispatches which were sent into *Persia* to carry the News of *Xerxes's* Overthrow, he saith, *Τετίων δὲ τῶν Ἀγγέλων εὐδὲν ἐστὶ θάσσον, ὅτι παραγίνεται σνητόν ἔον, &c.* There is nothing upon Earth swifter than these Messengers, whom neither Snow, nor Rain, nor Heat, nor Night can hinder from finishing their Course speedily: The Manner of which he there sets down, which the *Persians*, he saith, call *Ἀγγαρίον*.

To destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little Children and Women, in one Day, even upon the thirteenth Day of the twelfth Month, and to take the Spoil of them for a Prey.] This was a strong Motive to such a bloody Execution, that they who killed them should enrich themselves by their Spoil.

Ver.

Ver. 14. *The Copy of the Writing for a Commandment to be given in every Province; was published unto all People, that they should be ready against that Day.]* Copies of this original Decree of the King were sent into every Province, and there ordered to be published, requiring them to be ready against that Day.

Ver. 15. *The Posts went out, being hastened by the King's Commandment, and the Decree was given in Shushan the Palace:]* He procured a new Commandment from the King, requiring their speedy Delivery of this Decree, that the People might not want Time to prepare for its Execution; and he also got it signed by the King's Council; for that seems to be meant by its being given in Shushan.

And the King and Haman sat down to drink,] It is likely Haman made an Entertainment for the King, to thank him for his great Kindness to him in this Grant.

But the City Shushan was perplexed.] The Jews that lived there, who were very numerous, knew not what to do: And it is probable other People in the City were very fearful what would become of them; not knowing but that they might also suffer in such a Massacre: And perhaps some of them were related to the Jews; or had made Friendship with them, and therefore were much concerned at this horrid Decree.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1. **W**HEN Mordecai perceived all that was done,] Which it is likely he heard by some Friend before it was publicly known, but did not express his Grief till the Edict was hung up.

Mordecai rent his Cloaths,] Both before and behind, saith the latter Targum.

And put on Sackcloth with Ashes,] As the Manner was, in great Sorrow.

And went out into the Midst of the City, and cried with a loud and a bitter Cry:] Saying, as the same Targum expresses it, What an heavy Decree is this which the King and Haman have passed upon us? Not against a Part of us, but upon us all, to root us out of the Earth: Whereupon all the Jews flock'd about him, and he caused the Book of the Law to be brought to the Gate of Shushan, covered with Sackcloth; and therein he read those Words of Moses in Deut. iv. 30, 31. *When thou art in Tribulation, and all these Things are come upon thee, in the latter Days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient to his Voice: (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God,) he will not forsake thee, nor destroy thee, nor forget the Covenant of thy Fathers, which he swore unto them.* After which he exhorted them to Fasting, Humiliation, and Repentance, according to the Example of the Ninevites.

Ver. 2. *And came even before the King's Gate,]* That his Cry might come to the Ears of Esther.

For none might enter into the King's Gate clothed with Sackcloth.] But he durst not take his Place in the Gate, because none that were in Mourning might come there. So careful

they were, not in the least to disturb the King in his Pleasures. By this it appears, as from many other Places, that in the Gate they made their Court, as we speak, and dispatched all publick Affairs; (as I have noted often before;) which was here practised more than in other Places, because the Persian Monarchs lived more retired than other Princes, few but those who attended them, being admitted into their Palace.

Ver. 3. *And in every Province whithersoever the King's Commandment and his Decree came; there was great Mourning among the Jews, and Fasting, and Weeping, and Wailing, and many lay in Sackcloth and Ashes.]* All Day long they fasted, and wept, and lamented themselves; and in the Night many lay, not in their Beds, but on the Ground in Sackcloth and Ashes.

Ver. 4. *So Esther's Maids and her Chamberlains came and told it her:]* As a Piece of News, or perhaps they understood there was some Relation between them.

Then was the Queen exceedingly grieved,] Imagining some Mischief had befallen him, and not knowing what it was.

And she sent Raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his Sackcloth from him:] That he might come to Court, and take his Place in the Gate.

But he received it not.] This, no doubt, very much increased her Grief.

Ver. 5. *Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the King's Chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her,]* In whom the King had a great Confidence, and whom she could intrust with such a Message.

And gave him a Commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was.] What was the Cause of his Weeping and Wailing; and why he would not accept of the Garments which she sent him; as the latter Targum very well explains it.

Ver. 6. *So Hatach went forth to Mordecai, unto the Street of the City, which was before the King's Gate.]* Where, it is like, he still continued lamenting their miserable Condition.

Ver. 7. *And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him,]* How he had refused to worship Haman, (as the former Targum explains it,) and how this had incensed him against the whole Nation.

And of the Sum of the Money that Haman had promised to pay to the King's Treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.] The ten thousand Talents he had offered, to procure the King's Consent to their Destruction.

Some of the Jews here add another marvelous Thing, which had happened to Mordecai the very Night before Hatach came to him; which he desired Esther might be acquainted withal: Whether it be true or false, I think fit here to remember it, (it seeming to be so piously designed,) as I had it near threescore Years ago from a great Man in the Jewish Learning, who quotes for it *R. Moses Almosnino* in a Book called *Jede Moseh*, (the Hands of Moses,) where he says, That Mordecai going home in great Heaviness, reflecting on the Danger his whole Nation was in, met three Boys coming

coming from School, whom he examined what they had learned that Day; one of them told him his Lesson had been in *Prov. iii. 25, 26. Be not afraid of sudden Fear, nor of the Desolation of the Wicked when it cometh: For the LORD shall be thy Confidence, &c.* Then Mordecai cried out, I am confident this Desolation shall not be so speedy. Then the second Child told him he had learned that Day *Isaiah viii. 10. Take Counsel together, it shall come to nought; speak the Word, (or pronounce the Decree,) it shall not stand; for God is with us:* O the wonderful Goodness of God, said Mordecai, that thus out of the Mouth of Babes and Sucklings ordaineth Strength! And what have you learned, said he to the third Child? who answered, *Isaiah xlii. 4. Even to your old Age I am he, (that is, the God,) unto hoary Hairs I will carry you; I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver you:* Now blessed be God (cried Mordecai) that hath not left us comfortless; his Hand shall be with us as in former Ages, &c. But another great Man in this Learning hath lately admonished me this *Rabbin* is but of Yesterday, and designed to elude the Prophecy of *Psalms viii.* quoted in the Gospel, and therefore unworthy to be mentioned in this Place.

Ver. 8. *Also he gave him the Copy of the Writing of the Decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther,*] That she might be fully satisfied what was intended.

And to charge her that she should go in unto the King, to make Supplication unto him, and to make Request before him for her People.] He charged her, I suppose, in the Name of God, or as she loved her Nation, to go and earnestly to beseech the King to be merciful to the Jews, as the *Targum* expounds it.

Ver. 9. *And Hatach came, and told Esther the Words of Mordecai.*

Ver. 10. *Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him Commandment unto Mordecai.*

Ver. 11. *All the King's Servants, and the People of the King's Provinces do know,*] That is, no Body either in the Court or in the whole Kingdom was ignorant.

That whosoever, whether Man or Woman, shall come unto the King into the inner Court, who is not called,] Here the King kept retired from all Company, but such as he called for, or was pleased to admit.

There is one Law of his to put him to Death,] Let him be of ever such Quality, there was no Exception; but one Law reached all that were so presumptuous. This seems to have been an ancient Law in that Country, mentioned by *Herodotus, Lib. I.* and *Athenæus, Lib. XII.* But the former *Targum* will have it, that it was procured by *Haman*, that none might come into the King's Presence unless he introduced them.

Except such to whom the King shall hold out the golden Sceptre, that he may live:] Which, I suppose was so seldom done, that few would venture to stand in need of a Pardon. A Sceptre was the Ensign of the highest and most absolute Authority; so that, as *Wagenfeil* observes, when Mordecai was advanced to the greatest

Dignity next to the King, having Royal Apparel, and a great Crown on his Head (*viii. 15.*) yet he had no Sceptre; for that was proper and peculiar to the King.

But I have not been called to come in unto the King these thirty Days.] Which might justly make her fear his Love was cooled to her, and then her Person and Petition might not be acceptable to him.

Ver. 12. *And they told to Mordecai Esther's Words.*] There seems to have been more than one Person that went with this Message, to confirm the Truth of what she said.

Ver. 13. *Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thy self that thou shalt escape in the King's House, more than all the Jews.*] He would not have her flatter herself with a vain Imagination, that because she was Queen she should be spared, for she would find no more Privilege in the King's House than the rest of the Jews did abroad.

Ver. 14. *For if thou altogether holdest thy Peace at this Time, then shall their Enlargement and Deliverance arise to the Jews from another Place,*] He did not know whence, but he confided in God, that by some Means or other he would preserve them from utter Destruction.

But thou and thy Father's House shall be destroyed:] He would have her believe that God would cut off her and her Family for Self-love, and want of Zeal to preserve her Nation.

And who knoweth, whether thou art come to the Kingdom for such a Time as this?] Rather than refuse to intercede for her People, he would have her think (though there was Danger in it) that God had raised her up to the Dignity in which she was, on purpose that she might be the Deliverer of her People, and therefore go courageously about it.

Ver. 15. *Then Esther bad them to return Mordecai this Answer.*

Ver. 16. *Go gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan,*] Not all into one publick Congregation; for that might have given Suspicion of an intended Insurrection, but in several private Assemblies.

And fast ye for me, neither eat or drink three Days, Night or Day,] None, or very few could keep a Fast for three Days and Nights, without tasting any Meat or Drink: The Meaning therefore is, that they should make no set Meal in their Families, neither Dinner nor Supper, but only eat and drink so much at Night as would support them in Prayer to God for a Blessing upon her Undertaking; or, as *Josephus* understands it, they should abstain from all Delicacies, and be content with hard and coarse Fare. But *Drusius* thinks this Fast was only one whole Day and two Nights, according as it is said of our Saviour, that he lay three Days and three Nights in the Grave; and then they might fast so long without taking any Refreshment; and in those hot Countries, we read of Monks that fasted four or five Days.

I also and my Maidens will fast likewise,] It is not likely her Maidens were Jews; yet notwithstanding they might be disposed to fast with her; which was not unusual with the Gentiles in Time of great Distress, as appears by

by the Story of the *Nenevites*, whose Fast the *Targum* thinks *Mordecai* imitated, making the Cattle, Oxen, and Sheep to abstain, as well as Men and Women.

And so will I go in unto the King, which is not according to the Law;] Being thus recommended to God, she resolved not so much to regard the Law, as the Preservation of her People; for there are in some Cases such violent Circumstances, that to observe the Law, as *Grotius* notes, would be to offend against the chiefest Law. Whither *Puffendorf* refers, what we read in *Valerius Maximus*, *Lib. III. Cap. 7. n. 1.* and *Cap. 8. n. 6.*

And if I perish, I perish.] This is not a Speech of Despondence, but of Courage and Resolution; being as much as to say, I am content to perish in so good a Cause; and if I perish for it in this World, (as the *Targum* glosses,) I shall have my Portion in the World to come.

Ver. 17. *So Mordecai went his Way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.*] Betook himself to Fasting and Prayer (unto which he called all the *Jews*) as long as *Esther* required, omitting the Joys of the paschal Feast, and turning it into a Fast, if we may believe the former *Targum*: For that Paraphrast thinks that *Haman* laying his Plot in the Month of *Nisan*, (ii. 7.) and *Mordecai* presently applying himself to defeat it, these Things must fall out about the Passover, which was in this Month. But in Memory of this the *Jews* keep a Fast on the thirteenth of *Adar*, which they call *Esther's Fast*.

C H A P. V.

Ver. 1. **N**OW it came to pass on the third Day,] In the Conclusion of the Fast, or, as the former *Targum*, on the third Day of the Passover.

That Esther put on her royal Apparel, and stood in the inner Court of the King's House, over against the King's House:] But first, saith the latter *Targum*, she made a solemn Prayer to God with many Tears, as soon as she was dressed, saying, *Thou art the great God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of my Father Benjamin; As thou didst deliver Hanneiah, Mishael, and Azariah out of the fiery Furnace, and Daniel from the Lion's Den, so deliver me now out of the Hand of the King, and give me Grace and Favour in his Eyes, &c.* And so he goes on in a very long Prayer.

And the King sat upon his Royal Throne in the Royal House, over against the Gate of the House.] So that he could see every one that came into the Court.

Ver. 2. *And it was so, when the King saw Esther the Queen standing in the Court, that she obtained Favour in his Sight:*] He was much moved, saith the former *Targum*, to see Trouble in her Countenance, and her Eyes full of Tears; and so immediately comforted her in the Manner following.

And the King held out to Esther the golden Scepter that was in his Hand:] In token of his Favour, and inviting her Approach. But the other *Targum* says, that the Officers about him,

as soon as she entred, ran to apprehend her, that she might be put to Death. But the King stopp'd them, by his shewing she was acceptable to him. So true is that of *Solomon*, *The King's Heart is in the Hand of the LORD; as the Rivers of Water, he turneth it whithersoever he will*, *Prov. xxi. 1.*

So Esther drew near, and touched the Top of the Scepter.] Kissed it, saith the *Vulgar*, or put her Hand under it, saith *Grotius*, in Token of her Subjection and Thankfulness for his Favour.

Ver. 3. *Then said the King unto her, What wilt thou, Queen Esther? And what is thy Request? It shall be even given thee to the Half of the Kingdom.*] This is an usual Form of Speech among Kings, when their Hearts are enlarged, and they overflow with Affection to others, or when they give them the freest Liberty to demand what they please, as *Grotius* explains it upon *St. Matth. xiv. 7.* It is a foolish Addition, which the latter *Targum* here makes, that he excepted one Thing, which was the Building the House of the Sanctuary at *Jerusalem*, which he would not grant, because he promised *Geshem*, *Sanballat*, and *Tobiah*, it should not be built, lest the *Jews* should rebel.

Ver. 4. *And Esther answered; If it seem good unto the King, let the King and Haman come this Day unto the Banquet that I have prepared for him.*] It was very prudent not to open her Mind presently, but first to endear his Affection by Feasting, Musick, Dancing, and whatsoever might please him. And it was no small Pleasure, it is likely, that she invited his Favourite to come to her Entertainment together with him. There was also a singular Providence of God in this Matter, which so disposed her Mind, that the high Honour the King bestowed on *Mordecai* the next Day might fall out between this and that, and make Way for her Petition.

Ver. 5. *And the King said, Cause Haman to make Haste, that he may do as Esther hath said.*] Get himself ready with all Speed.

So the King and Haman came to the Banquet that Esther had prepared.

Ver. 6. *And the King said unto Esther at the Banquet of Wine,*] At the Conclusion of the Entertainment: For they did not drink Wine, but Water, at the Beginning of their Feasts.

What is thy Petition? And it shall be granted unto thee: And what is thy Request? Even to the Half of the Kingdom it shall be performed.] This shews it was not a sudden Passion of Love that made him speak so kindly to her before, but he had a settled Affection for her, which disposed him to be very bountiful, and shewed he was much pleased with her Entertainment.

Ver. 7. *Then answered Esther, and said, My Petition and my Request is;*

Ver. 8. *If I have found Favour in the Sight of the King, and if it please the King to grant my Petition, and to perform my Request, let the King and Haman come to the Banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to morrow as the King hath said.*] That is, make her Request to him: Which she thought would be more reasonable, when she had won his Heart by fresh Expressions of her Desire to please him, and obtained

obtained also a new Promise from him, that he would deny her nothing: For there was need of a great Preparation, to dispose him to do so great a Thing for her, as to revoke or suspend his own Decree. The *latter Targum*, after his Fashion, gives several frivolous Reasons why she invited *Haman* to the Banquet twice, but the last of them is tolerable. The *Israelites* were in great Expectation of the Issue of this Feasting, and hoped to see *Haman* presently cut off; but she was resolved to turn their Thoughts the right Way, that is, from her unto God, looking for Mercy from their heavenly Father.

Ver. 9. *Then went Haman forth that Day joyful, and with a glad Heart:*] To think he was in such Favour with the Queen, as well as with the King.

But when *Haman* saw *Mordecai* in the King's Gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of Indignation against *Mordecai*.] The *Targum* still repeats it, that he saw *Mordecai* would not rise up before his Image.

Ver. 10. *Nevertheless Haman refrained himself,*] From taking any sudden Revenge.

And when he came home, he sent and called for his Friends, and *Zeresh* his Wife.] The Daughter of *Totni* (saith the *latter Targum*) one of the King of *Persia*'s Governors beyond the River.

Ver. 11. *And Haman told them of the Glory of his Riches,*] How splendidly he lived.

And the Multitude of his Children,] It was a Glory in this Country, as *Drusius* observes, to have Abundance of Children; but the *Targum* had no Shame, when he affirms he had two hundred and fourscore, besides those ten that were Princes in the Provinces, and besides *Shimshæus* the King's Secretary.

And all the Things wherein the King had promoted him,] What Offices and Dignities he had conferred upon him.

And how he had advanced him above the Princes and Servants of the King.] So that he took Place of the greatest Princes who were Natives of the Country; and of all the Officers in the Court.

Ver. 12. *Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the Queen did let no Man come in with the King unto the Banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to Morrow am I invited unto her also with the King.*] He did not fail to relate the peculiar Honour the Queen had done him, which he could not but look upon as a Token that he was established in the Favour of the Court.

Ver. 13. *Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's Gate.*] How small a Matter will spoil all the Satisfaction of those who are arrived at the Top of human Felicity! Immense Riches, Glory and Honour, gave not *Haman* so much Pleasure, as he felt Pain from one Man's Disrespect unto him: And yet he might have given himself Ease before this, by speaking one Word to the King to displace *Mordecai*, or put him to Death, if his Pride and Passion would have let him be contented, without the Destruction of a whole Nation.


Ver. 14. *Then said Zeresh his Wife, and all his Friends unto him, Let a Gallows be made of fifty Cubits high,*] That Men might see him that was hanged on it afar off, and be struck with the greater Terror by that Spectacle, of giving any Disgust to *Haman*.

And to Morrow speak thou unto the King, that *Mordecai* may be hanged thereon:] They advised him not to wait till the general Slaughter of all the Jews, but to rid him presently of *Mordecai*; for which he had now a fair Opportunity, being to attend on the King to Morrow unto the Banquet.

Then go thou in merrily with the King unto the Banquet. When his Heart was eased of this Trouble; the Dispatch of his Enemy, and the Banquet, giving him a double Pleasure.

And the Thing pleased *Haman*, and he caused the Gallows to be made. And set up before the Door of *Mordecai*'s House, saith the former *Targum*, against the plain Words of this History, vii. 9. where it is said, they stood in *Haman*'s House; from whence, it is possible, he intended to remove them to the Door of *Mordecai*: That *Targum* hath a great deal of frivolous Stuff about this Consultation which *Haman*'s Friends had, how to destroy *Mordecai*; some advising one Way, and some another, but none approved of till this was propounded. The Reason given for it is foolish; but at last he concludes piously, That the Jews were extremely troubled at the Sight of these Gallows, and all cried to God in the Words of the *Psalmist*, cxxiii. 2. Behold, as the Eyes of Servants look unto the Hand of their Masters, and as the Eyes of a Maiden unto the Hand of her Mistress; so our Eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have Mercy upon us.

CHAP. VI.

Ver. 1.  *ON that Night could not the King sleep,*] Now follows a wonderful Turn of Affairs: God so disposing it, that the King could take no Rest in the Night, and instead of Musick and Singing, and diverting himself with his Wives and Concubines, he called for the Records of the Kingdom to be read to him.

And he commanded to bring the Book of Records of the Chronicles; and they were read before the King. These were *Diaries* wherein were set down what passed every Day, which we now call *Journals*, (as I observed, ii. 13.) And in them it was the Manner of the *Persians* to set down the Names of those who had done the King any eminent Service; as *Grotius* notes out of *Herodotus*, *Thucydides*, and *Procopius*.

Ver. 2. *And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Tereſh, two of the King's Chamberlains, the Keepers of the Door, who sought to lay Hand on the King Abasuerus.*] It was a singular Providence of God, that they should read in that very Part of the Book, wherein the Service of *Mordecai* was recorded. And the *latter Targum*, to increase the Wonder, saith, that *Shimshæus*, who brought the Book, and opened it at this Place, seeing this which was written of *Mordecai*, turned over the Leaves, and would have read in another Part

of the Book; but the Leaves flew back again to the same Place where he opened it, and he was forced to read the Story to the King.

Ver. 3. *And the King said, What Honour and Dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the King's Servants that ministred unto him, There is nothing done for him.*] Great Men sometimes are unmindful of the highest Services that are done them, and take no Care to reward them. Though some think the King ordered him a Reward, of which, by the Artifice of those in the Court, who hated the Jews, he was deprived. But there was a special Providence in it, that he went without a Reward then, which procured it for him most opportunely at this Time. It is not improbable, that, as *Josephus* saith, the History of some of his Ancestors was read before they came to his Reign; wherein was set down what Services Men had done, and what Preferment or Gifts had been bestowed upon them; which moved the King to ask, when they came to this Story of *Mordecai*, what had been done for him?

Ver. 4. *And the King said, Who is in the Court?]* For he was resolved immediately to shew how sensible he was of his Service.

(*Now Haman was come into the outward Court of the King's House, to speak unto the King, to hang Mordecai on the Gallows that he had prepared for him*)] He was come very early to Court that he might gratify his Revenge, and go with more Pleasure to the Banquet. This was another Part of God's Providence, to bring him so soon to Court, when the King was thus disposed.

Ver. 5. *And the King's Servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the Court. And the King said, Let him come in.*] Which he durst not do, as great as he was, without Leave.

Ver. 6. *So Haman came in: and the King said unto him, What shall be done unto the Man whom the King delighteth to honour?]* The King in all Probability would not have asked this Question, but ordered himself what he thought fit, if God had not intended that *Mordecai* should have the greatest Honour done him, and that by the Judgment of his greatest Enemy.

(*Now Haman thought in his Heart, to whom would the King delight to do Honour more than to my self?*)] He had Reason to think so, because he had already heaped so many Favours upon him, and was now invited by the Queen to keep him Company at her Banquet.

Ver. 7. *And Haman answered the King, For the Man whom the King delighteth to honour,*

Ver. 8. *Let the Royal Apparel be brought which the King useth to wear,]* When he went abroad, and appeared publickly among his People; which should rather be translated, *the Royal Robe*, an external Garment, or Stole coming down to his Feet, which none wore but himself.

And the Horse that the King rideth upon,] I suppose it was a Horse which none might ride upon but himself; like the Mule among the Kings of *Israel*, which was peculiarly appointed to their own Use, as I have noted on 1 Kings i. 33. *Herodotus*, Lib. i. mentions such

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a generous and most noble Horse belonging to the King of *Persia*.

And the Crown Royal which is set upon his Head:] That is, upon the Horse's Head, upon which there was a Royal Ornament; as there is now at *Rome*, called a *Fiocco*. For *Keter* is a very large Word, signifying any Ornament about the Head or the Neck. And that this refers to the Horse, not to the King, is plain in the *Hebrew*, and from the next Verse, and Ver. 10, 11. where there is no more Mention of this *Keter*; but only of the Robe, and of the Horse, to which this Royal Ornament upon his Head belonged. See *Ludovicus de Dieu*.

Ver. 9. *And let this Apparel and Horse be delivered to the Hand of one of the King's most noble Princes, that they may array the Man withal whom the King delighteth to honour, and bring him on Horseback through the Street of the City, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the Man whom the King delighteth to honour.]* This Proclamation, in all likelihood, was made by some publick Officer.

Ver. 10. *Then the King said to Haman, Make haste, and take the Apparel and the Horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the King's Gate.]* It is very likely these Words astonished *Haman*, and made as great Commotions in him, as the *Targum* here describes: But he durst not dispute the King's Command, nor ask him what *Mordecai* he meant (there being many of that Name) when the King had plainly told him, on whom it was he intended to bestow this Honour. But if he made any Difficulty to obey this Command, or desired to be excused; the King bid him say no more, but go (as the Verse includes) and let nothing fail of all that he had spoken.

Ver. 11. *Then took Haman the Apparel, and the Horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on Horseback through the Street of the City, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the Man whom the King delighteth to honour.]* At which Sight (saith the latter *Targum*) *Esther* praised God in the Words of the *Psalmist*, cxiii. 7, 8. *He raiseth up the Poor out of the Dust, and lifteth the Needy out of the Dunghil: That he may set him with Princes, even with the Princes of his People.* And *Mordecai* said those Words, *Psal.* xxx. 11, 12. *Thou hast turned for me my Mourning into Dancing: Thou hast put off my Sackcloth, and girded me with Gladness: I will praise thee, O LORD God my Redcemer, that thou hast not let mine Enemy triumph over me.*

Ver. 12. *And Mordecai came again to the King's Gate:]* Returned to his Duty, clothed not in Sackcloth, as the *Targum* represents him (for then he might not have come there) but in his own Raiment; shewing he was not puffed up with the Honour that had been done him; but foreseeing, no doubt, the happy Event which followed.

But Haman hastened to his House, mourning, and having his Head covered.] Which was a Token of Sadness and Dejection.

Ver. 13. *And Haman told Zereſh his Wife, and all his Friends,]* Who were waiting to hear what was become of *Mordecai*, whom they advised to get hanged on the Gallows.

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Every thing that had befallen him.] How cross every thing had fallen out to him that Morning.

Then said his wife Men, and Zereſh his Wife,] They whose Counſel he had uſed in his Divination by Lots, now changed their Mind; and his Wife concurred in Opinion with them, that theſe were bad Omens.

If Mordecai be of the Seed of the Jews, before whom thou haſt begun to fall, thou ſhalt not prevail againſt him, but ſhalt ſurely fall before him.] They had obſerved, it is likely, how the Jews had been wonderfully raiſed from under great Oppreſſions, ſince the Time of Cyrus, and thence conclude there was a particular Providence that took Care of them. And it is poſſible they had heard ſomething of the Oracle againſt the *Amalekites*, that they ſhould periſh by the Hands of the Jews. And as Dr. Jackson excellently notes (*Book 1. on the Creed, Chap. 21.*) Thoſe Plots which would have cruſhed other Nations, did often turn to their Advancement, and the Fall of their Enemies. Whence both their Riſing and Falling, and conſequently the Succeſs of ſuch as oppoſed them, was in the Apprehenſion of wiſe Men of other Nations merely fatal; altogether incorrigible by worldly Policy. Whence theſe wiſe Men of *Chaldea* (as he calls them) upon the firſt Notice of the Wind's turning for them, read *Haman's* Deſtiny. And accordingly *Achior's* Speech to *Holofernes*, *Judith* v. 17, &c. (whether truly uttered, or feigned by the Pen-Man of the Hiſtory) was framed according to the known Experience of thoſe Times, and contained ſuch Advices as a faithful Counſellor, well acquainted with the Eſtate of the Jews, ſhould have given to his Lord, who did not ſo well underſtand it.

Ver. 14. *And while they were yet talking with him, came the King's Chamberlains, and haſted to bring Haman unto the Banquet that Eſther had prepared.]* He hearing their Opinion, that theſe Things boded ſome Evil to him, was very ſlow, we may well ſuppoſe, in his Motion; and could have been content, perhaps, not to have gone to the Banquet. Or he was muſing what to do for his Preſervation, which made him ſtay longer than he ſhould have done, before he waited on the King to it.

C H A P. VII.

Verſe. 1. *SO the King and Haman came to banquet with Eſther the Queen.*

Ver. 2. *And the King ſaid again to Eſther on the ſecond Day, at the Banquet of Wine,]* When his Heart was merry, and highly delighted with his Entertainment.

What is thy Petition, Queen Eſther? and it ſhall be granted thee: And what is thy Request? and it ſhall be performed even to the Half of the Kingdom.] This Promise renewed the third Time, gave her Courage to preſent her Suit to him.

Ver. 3. *Then Eſther the Queen]* Lifting up her Eyes to Heaven, as the *Targum* enlarges it, *Answered and ſaid, If I have found Favour in*

thy Sight, O King, and if it pleaſe the King,] Thus ſhe prefaced to her Request, when ſhe only beſeeched him to accept of a Banquet from her.

Let my Life be given me at my Petition, and my People at my Request.] That is, the Life of her People.

Ver. 4. *For we are ſold, I and my People, to be deſtroyed, to be ſlain, and to periſh:]* For *Haman* had offered a great Sum of Money to purchaſe their Deſtruction. She uſes ſo many Words, that ſhe might expreſs the outrageous Miſchief intended againſt them; which was no leſs than their Extermination.

But if we had been ſold for Bond-Men and Bond-Women, I had held my Tongue,] For that might have turned to the King's Profit, and they might, at one Time or other, have recovered their Liberty.

Although the Enemy could not countervail the King's Damage.] The King would not have gained ſo much as he would have loſt by it. But there is another Interpretation, which *Aben Ezra* mentions; who takes the Hebrew Word *Hatzar* not to ſignify an Enemy, but *Diſtreſs Miſery and Trouble*. Which makes this Senſe, *If they had ſold us for Slaves, I had not troubled the King with my Petition, becauſe that Miſery of ours would not have been ſo much to the King's Damage.* See *de Dieu*.

Ver. 5. *Then the King Ahaſuerus answered and ſaid unto Eſther the Queen, Who is he? and where is he that durſt preſume in his Heart to do ſo?]* It ſeemed incredible that any Man ſhould entertain ſuch a Thought (for the King, I ſuppoſe, had forgot the Decree *Haman* had obtained from him) to cut off a whole Nation. In the Hebrew the Words are, *Who is he whoſe Heart hath filled him to do ſo?* A Speech like that in the New Teſtament, *Acts* v. 3. *Why hath Satan filled thine Heart?* Made thee ſo daring and preſumptuous. The like, *Eccleſ.* viii. 11.

Ver. 6. *And Eſther ſaid, The Adverſary and Enemy is this wicked Haman.]* She found now that ſhe need not fear to ſpeak plainly.

Then Haman was afraid before the King and the Queen.] For he could not but ſee the Danger he was in to loſe his Greatneſs and his Life. And his Fear was the greater now he knew the Queen was one of that Nation whom he had conſpired to deſtroy.

Ver. 7. *And the King ariſing from the Banquet of Wine in his Wrath, went into the Palace-Garden;]* To take Breath and cool himſelf; being in a great Commotion, by Variety of Paſſions boiling and ſtruggling in him. For as he loved the Queen, ſo he loved *Haman*; and yet was full of Indignation that he ſhould engage him in ſuch an odious Deſign.

And Haman ſtood up to make Request for his Life to Eſther the Queen:] Who he thought might have ſo much Tenderneſs, as to take Compaſſion upon him, and forgive him.

For he ſaw that there was Evil determined againſt him by the King.] Which he diſcerned by the King's Countenance, and by his going out of the Room in a great Fume, and violent Paſſion; which, it is likely, broke out into threatening Words.

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Ver. 8. *Then the King returned out of the Palace-Garden, into the Place of the Banquet of Wine; and Haman was fallen upon the Bed whereon Esther was.]* They sate, or rather lay upon Beds, as they eat and drank: And Haman fell down as a Suppliant at the Feet of Esther, laying his Hand upon her Knees, and beseeching her to take Pity upon him. I have not read any where that this was the Manner among the *Persians*; but it was among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, to embrace the Knees of those whom they petitioned to be favourable to them. In-
somuch that it was a Rite in their religious Worship to touch the Knees of their Gods. See *Pliny*, Lib. 11. Cap. 45. And thus *Sulpitius Severus* takes it to have been done here, *Deinde regressus Rex, vidit Aman Reginae genua amplexum.*

Then said the King, Will he force the Queen also before me in the House?] The King finding him in this Posture, interpreted it, as if he were so impudent as before the King's Face, and in his own Palace, to offer Violence to the Queen's Chastity. Not that he believed this was his Intention; but in his furious Passion, he turned every Thing to the worst Sense, and made use of it to aggravate his Crime.

As the Word went out of the King's Mouth, they covered Haman's Face.] That he might not see the Face of the King any more. Or rather, as a Man condemned, this told him his Doom: For it is likely the King, when he saw him in that Posture, made a Sign what they should do with him, which immediately was performed. Though *Aben Ezra* saith, this was always done to those with whom the King was angry, though they were not put to Death; to shew them what they deserved, never to see the King more.

Ver. 9. *And Harbonah, one of the Chamberlains, said before the King,] The latter Targum saith, that this Harbonah was one of Haman's Counsel, who advised him to set up the Gallows to hang Mordecai; but seeing this strange Turn of Affairs, incensed the King, by telling him what Haman designed against him who had saved the King's Life.*

Behold also the Gallows fifty Cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the King, standeth in the House of Haman.] Upon which he intended to make Mordecai an Example to all those that should presume to offend him.


Then the King said, Hang him thereon.] But whether dead or alive is not said, as Salmasius observes; who shews by many Instances (in his Book De Cruce, p. 494.) that it was the Manner of the Persians first to cut off the Heads of Malefactors, and then to hang them on a Gibbet. Josephus indeed saith, that he commanded Haman εν σταυρῷ κρεμασθῆναι ἀποθανεῖν, to be put to Death hanging on a Cross: But Crucifying was not a Persian Punishment; nor did the Romans let the Bodies of Malefactors die on the Cross of themselves; but they extinguished them some other Way.

Ver. 10. *So they hanged Haman on the Gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the King's Wrath pacified.] The latter Targum*

here adds a great deal of frivolous Stuff, how the King sent for Mordecai, and charged him to see the Execution done upon Haman; and how he begged of Mordecai to spare his Life, at least not hang him, who had been so great, like a Varlet, &c. but he concludes very well, that now was verified the Observation of Solomon, Prov. xi. 8. *The Righteous is delivered out of Trouble, and the Wicked cometh in his stead.*

I cannot think fit to end this Chapter without taking Notice of a Reflection, which a great Man of our own Church made long ago upon it: That in this wonderful Deliverance of the Jewish Nation, there was no extraordinary Manifestation of God's Power, no particular Cause or Agent, that was in its working advanced above the ordinary Pitch of Nature; and yet the Contrivance, or Suiting of those ordinary Agents appointed by God, is more admirable than if the same End had been effected by Means truly miraculous. That a King should not sleep is not unusual, nor that he should solace his waking Thoughts by hearing the Annals of his own Kingdom, or the Journals of his own Reign read to him, &c. But that he should lie awake at that Time especially, when Haman was watching to destroy the Jews; and that in the Chronicles of the Kingdom, they should light on that Place where Mordecai's unrewarded Services were recorded; and that he should resolve forthwith to do him Honour; and Haman come in at that very nick of Time when the King was so disposed; and should ignorantly determine what Honour should be done him, and be made the Instrument of it: This was from the Keeper of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, and was truly marvellous in his People's Sight, as Dr. Jackson speaks in his second Sermon upon 2 Chron. vi. 39, 40. where he observes, that Miracles are in their Nature more apt to affect the Sense; but such secret Contrivances of God's Wisdom and Providence do more affect the Understanding. The one works Astonishment, the other Admiration. For which Reason Miracles were more frequent in the Infancy of our Religion, to enforce Unbelievers to give ear to the Words of Life, and to take God's Promises (which otherwise they might have slighted) into serious Consideration: But now the Ways of God's Wisdom, or secret Dispositions of his Providence, are more apt to cherish the Seed of Life, sown in the Hearts of Believers. Miracles by continual Frequency would cease to be Miracles, and not be wondered at; whereas the unfearchable Ways of God's Wisdom in contriving extraordinary Successes by Means ordinarily, will incessantly breed in us Matter of Admiration. And his wise Contrivances are still in one kind or other most visible; but we want Eyes or Hearts to observe or contemplate them.

C H A P. VIII.

Verse. 1.  *N that Day did the King Abasuerus give the House of Haman the Jews Enemy, unto Esther the Queen:] That is, he bestowed on her the whole Estate belonging to his*

his Family (for this is meant by *his House*) his Lands, his Goods, his Servants, his Cattle, all the Money he had treasured up. For by his Crime all was forfeited to the King; who could not more fitly dispose of it, than to her who would have been the greatest Sufferer by him.

And Mordecai came before the King;] By *Esther's* Intercession.

For Esther had told what he was unto her.] Which was not known at Court till now; though two Eunuchs, who were her Confidants, knew something of it, ii. 21. and he perhaps who carried Messages between them, iv. 5, 13.

Ver. 2. *And the King took off his Ring which he had taken from Haman,]* Which he had formerly given him, iii. 10. but now had resumed.

And gave it unto Mordecai.] In Token that he put the same Confidence in him, to be the Keeper of his Signet.

And Esther set Mordecai over the House of Haman.] Not over his Family, for that was destroyed; but over his Lands and Goods which the King had given to *Esther*: Of which she made *Mordecai* her Steward, that he might manage that vast Estate, which *Haman* no doubt had heaped up, for her Advantage.

Ver. 3. *And Esther spake yet again before the King, and fell down at his Feet and besought him with Tears,]* The Danger was not yet over, and therefore she renews her Petition in the most humble and most moving Manner; for Tears flowing from so great a Person, have a great Power to move Compassion. But she had not yet delivered her Petition, these Words only expressing what she intended and was prepared to do.

To put away the Mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his Device that he had devised against the Jews.] By repealing that bloody Decree, which he had obtained from the King, iii. 13.

Ver. 4. *Then the King held out the Golden Sceptre toward Esther.]* Who it seems had adventured to press into the King's Presence once more, without being called: Which he did not take ill, but graciously invited her to come to him by this Token.

So Esther arose and stood before the King,] She rose from her Knees, and stood before him to make her Request.

Ver. 5. *And said, If it please the King, and I have found Favour in his Sight, and the Thing seem right before the King, and I be pleasing in his Eyes;]* She uses such Variety of Expressions for the same Thing, to insinuate her self into the King's Favour, by an entire Submission to his Pleasure. For she knew what an unusual Thing it was that she was about to desire.

Let it be written to reverse the Letters devised by Haman the Son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the King's Provinces:] This Edict which *Haman* procured, some think was not made in such a Manner as to become immutable, like that, i. 19. but might be revoked by another Edict more peremptory. But this I think is a Mistake, for it was sealed with the King's

Ring, which he himself saith, *Ver. 8. no Man may reverse.*

Ver. 6. *For how can I endure to see the Evil that shall come unto my People? or how can I endure to see the Destruction of my Kindred?]* If she herself should be spared, she represents to him that it would break her Heart to see all her Kindred, nay, her whole Nation destroyed.

Ver. 7. *Then the King Ahasuerus said unto Esther the Queen, and to Mordecai the Jew,]* Who, I suppose, was sent for to hear the King's Answer to her Petition.

Behold, I have given Esther the House of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the Gallows, because he laid his Hand upon the Jews.] That is, intended to destroy them all. By what the King had done to shew his Resentment against *Haman*, they might easily believe he would deny them nothing that was necessary for their Preservation.

Ver. 8. *Write ye also for the Jews,]* As *Haman* had done against them.

As it liketh you,] In as full Words as you can desire for your Safety.

In the King's Name, and seal it with the King's Ring:] To give it the same Authority which the former Writing had.

For the Writing which is written in the King's Name, and sealed with the King's Ring, may no Man reverse.] This seems to me to signify, that the King could not do what *Esther* desired, *Ver. 5.* for it was contrary to the Law of the *Medes* and *Persians* to reverse any Decree. But he promises to do what he was able, to make that Decree ineffectual, by giving them Power to defend themselves against all that should assault them. And for that End he bid them draw up a Letter, in Words as strong as they could devise, which would hinder the former Decree from being executed, though he could not annul it. And accordingly we find by what follows, that there is not a Word said of revoking *Haman's* Decree; but only that they should stand for their Lives and destroy all, little and great, that should attempt to execute the Decree sent by *Haman*. Thus he chose to fill his Realm with Blood, rather than revoke a rash Decree; which was agreeable enough to the Temper of *Ochus*, who is represented by *Valerius Maximus* as very cruel. So *Jacobus Capellus* observes, *ad A. M. 3650.* where he saith he doth not remember any Heathen Writer who mentions such an absurd Law as this of the *Medes* and *Persians*; though *Ælian* mentions one, not much less unreasonable.

Ver. 9. *Then were the King's Scribes called at that Time]* As they had been before by *Haman* to write his Decree, iii. 12. The Author of the *Apocryphal* Additions to this Book, hath forged a Copy of this Letter; wherein the King tells his Subjects, that it was not Levity which made him change his Mind, and contradict the former Decree; but he found he had been deceived by the false Suggestions of those whom he highly honoured; as many other great Kings had been before him. Which Letter discovers the Ignorance of him that wrote it, in that he calls *Haman* a *Macedonian*, who intended to dethrone him and take away his Life.

In the third Month (that is in the Month Sivan) on the three and twentieth Day thereof,] A little more than two Months, after the former Decree.

And it was written (according to all that Mordecai commanded) unto the Jews,] That they might prepare themselves for their Defence, the best they could; and let all Men know what Power the King had given them.

And to the Lieutenants, and the Deputies and Rulers of the Provinces] Who were commanded (as they were in Haman's Decree, iii. 12.) to be assistant to them, and furnish them with Means to defend themselves.

Which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven Provinces, unto every Province according to the Writing thereof, and unto every People after their Language, and to the Jews according to their Writing, and according to their Language.] This doth not prove that there were so many distinct Languages spoken in his Dominions, and many different Ways of Writing; but, as Bochartus observes, whatsoever any People spake, or what Character soever they used (which might be the very same in some Provinces) there were Letters wrote to them in that Language, and in that Character, Lib. 1. Phaleg, Cap. 16.

Ver. 10. *And he wrote in the King Abasuerus his Name, and sealed it with the King's Ring, and sent Letters by Posts on Horseback, and Riders on Mules, Camels, and young Dromedaries:] It is very difficult to render this Verse Word by Word, though the Sense be very plain. For the first Words Bejad baratzim seem to me to signify by the Hand of Couriers, as we now speak; for Ratzim signifies Runners or Racers. And the next Basusim, undoubtedly signifies, on Horses: The former Targum saith, of Horses whose Spleen were cut out, and their Hoofs pared; which Bochartus shews was sometimes practised, in his Hierozoicon, P. 1. Lib. 2. Cap. 11. Then here follows Rocheve bareches, Riders on a swift Beast, called Rechtes. But what Animal that was is very uncertain. Many say a Dromedary; with which Drusius is unsatisfied, but leaves it in Doubt, Miscellan. Cent. 2. Cap. 73. Bochartus thinks it is a Word added to explain what went before, signifying that he sent the Posts upon the swiftest Horses; for Rechtes was a kind of Horse. See 1 Kings iv. 28. Our Translation takes it for Mules, which Ælian saith, were ἄγαν δεγμῆαις, exceeding swift Runners, and therefore used in the Olympic Races, as Bochartus observes, Hieroz. P. 1. Lib. 2. Cap. 21. Then the next Word, Abashteranim (which we translate Camels) he takes to be a Persian Word, for there is a Word at this Day in that Language of the same Sound and Signification, viz. Asthera. See his Phaleg, Lib. 1. Cap. 15. Then follows Bene baramachim, which we translate young Dromedaries; and the latter Targum, the Foals of Mares. And so Bochartus shews that Ramec doth signify a Mare; from whence he thinks the Word Marc among the ancient Gauls was derived, which Pausanias tells us signified a Horse: For there was such a Transposition of Letters as is in the Word*

forma, which comes from μορφή. In his Canaan, Lib. 1. Cap. 42. There is extant a Work of a very learned young Man of our own (now with God) who, after that he had observed that neither the latter nor the ancient Jews, nor the Gemarists themselves knew what to make of this Word, hath made a long Discourse about it. See Guil. Guisius in his Annotations upon that Title in the Mishnah, called Kelaim.

The Sense of the whole is, that he sent Men on Horseback (naked, as the first Targum will have it, that they might be lighter) and upon other Creatures as swift as Horses, and upon Mules both old and young, according as the Places were nearer or farther off. So he ordered the Letters to be sent with great Speed by the Post, which carried them from Stage to Stage, till they came to the Place whither they were directed.

Ver. 11. *Wherein the King granted the Jews, which were in every City, to gather themselves together,] Notwithstanding that former Decree sent by Haman.*

And to stand for their Life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish all the Power of the People, and Province, that would assault them, both little ones, and Women, and to take the Spoil of them for a Prey:] It must be presumed that some would obey the former Order, out of their Hatred to the Jews; therefore this gives them Authority, if any Attempt was made upon them, either in great Bodies or small Parties, not only to defend themselves and repel them, but to make as great a Slaughter of them as they were able (for he uses many Words to express the Liberty he gave them to destroy their Enemies) not sparing Children and Women; and to possess themselves of their Goods, as Men used to do in War, and as Haman had procured them License to take the Goods of the Jews, iii. 13.

Ver. 12. *Upon one Day, in all the Provinces of King Abasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth Day of the twelfth Month, which is the Month Adar.] Which Day was chosen and appointed by Haman for their Destruction.*

Ver. 13. *The Copy of the Writing for a Commandment to be given in every Province] To warrant them to do what was therein commanded.*

Was published unto all People, and that the Jews should be ready against that Day, to avenge themselves on their Enemies.] Furnish themselves with Arms, and all Things necessary for their Defence, and to annoy their Enemies on that Day. The latter Targum makes bold to insert a Copy of this Letter, which imports, that the King was deceived by Haman, who persuaded him to write the former Letter; but now he had hanged him, because he found the Jews to be an innocent People, worthy of his Protection: And especially commended Esther and Mordecai, whom he had taken into his Favour. And therefore sent this new Signification of his Will and Pleasure to them in the Behalf of the Jews. There are many Expressions in it, which, no doubt, he never used; but the Sense of it is good.

Ver.

Ver. 14. *So the Posts which rode upon Mules and Camels, went out,]* Here are two of the same Words used again, *Reches* and *Haashteranin*; the latter of which is translated *Camels*, as it was before; which, though they be not a swift Creature, yet are very fit to travel through dry Countries better than Horses, being very patient of Thirst and Labour.

Being hastened and pressed on by the King's Commandment;] Who gave them a strict Charge to make all the Speed possible to disperse this new Order.

And the Decree was given at Shushan the Palace.] As that sent by *Haman* was, iii. 15. and, as I there observed, signed, it is probable, by the King's Counsellors.

Ver. 15. *And Mordecai went out from the Presence of the King, in royal Apparel of blue and white,]* In such Robes as the Princes of *Persia* were wont to wear.

And with a great Crown of Gold,] Not like that of the Kings; but such a Coronet as was used by the greatest Peers of the Realm.

And with a Garment of fine Linen, and Purple;] This was his inner Garment, as the former was the outward. The former *Targum* hath made an extravagant Description of the Riches of the Habit, wherein *Mordecai* appeared; his Tunick costing four hundred and twenty Talents of Gold; and many such Things which he saith about his Sword, and the Chain of Gold about his Neck, which it would be a Vanity to mention. But one Thing he saith, which is pious, if it were truly related, That *Esther* looking out of her Window, saw him walk in this State. And he spying her, said those Words of the *Psalmist*, cxxiv. 6. *Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given me a Prey unto their Teeth.* To which she replied in the Words of *Psalm* cxxii. 7. *Our Help standeth in the LORD, who hath made Heaven and Earth.*

And the City of Shushan rejoiced and was glad:] At his Advancement, and at the Fall of *Haman*, who designed the Ruin of such an excellent Person.

Ver. 16. *The Jews had Light and Gladness, and Joy,]* All these Words signify the same Thing, expressing the highest Joy and Satisfaction.

And Honour.] They were much respected by the People.

Ver. 17. *And in every Province, and in every City, whithersoever the King's Commandment and his Decree came,]* His Commandment was, that the Decree should be published with all Speed; and both of them were known together; what Decree the King had made, and how he pressed the Delivery of it, ver. 14.

The Jews had Joy and Gladness, a Feast and a good Day:] Not only in *Shushan*, but every where else, they entertained one another, and their Neighbours with good Cheer, being full of Joy at this unexpected Alteration of their Affairs. For they doubted not this new Decree of the King's would be observed by his People; and they were resolved to defend themselves against those that did not observe it, and destroy them.

And many of the People of the Land became Jews;] Many of the *Persians* became Profelytes to the *Jewish* Religion, as both the *Targums* explain it; but that they were circumcised is not probable. Such Persons there were in all Times, especially in the Days of *David* and *Solomon*, when the Affairs of the *Jews* were very prosperous. But the *Jews* say they did not admit them presently, till the Court of Judgment approved them as sincere Converts. See *Selden De Jure Nat. & Gent. Lib. 2. Cap. 2. & 4.* where he observes, that such Persons ever after went by the Name of *Jews* (as *Dio* himself takes notice) and were not reckoned *Gentiles* if they fell to Idolatry, but called Apostates. See p. 149, 150, &c. 160.

For the Fear of the Jews fell upon them.] The Liberty granted them by the King's Edict, and the Power of the Queen and *Mordecai*, made the *Persians* stand in awe of them and of their God, who had so marvellously disposed Things in their Favour. See the next Chapter, ver. 2, 3.

But this hath made some admire that such a marvellous and memorable Thing should not be related, nor so much as touched by any extick Writer whatsoever. Of which *Jacobus Capellus* hath given a plain Reason, that the History of *Ochus* is described by no Writer, but only *Diodorus Siculus*; and he meddles with the Affairs of *Persia* no further than as they cohere with the Affairs of *Greece*.

CHAP. IX.

Verse 1. **N**OW in the twelfth Month (that is the Month *Adar*) on the thirteenth Day of the same, when the King's Commandment and his Decree drew near to be put in execution, in the Day that the Enemies of the *Jews* hoped to have Power over them] As they often boasted (it is likely) and threatned, since the Decree, which *Haman* sent, came to them; for that had gotten start of the other and put the *Jews* into great Terror and Confusion, and their Enemies into high Expectation of their Ruin.

(Though it was turned to the contrary, that the *Jews* had Rule over them that hated them)] As it appeared presently when the Time was come for the executing both the Decrees.

Ver 2. *The Jews gathered themselves together in their Cities throughout all the Provinces of the King Abasuerus, to lay Hand on such as sought their Hurt;]* As some did, being possessed with Hatred to them, and being combined, it is likely, upon the Receipt of *Haman's* Decree, to endeavour to destroy them. It cannot be imagined, that when *Haman* perished, all his Friends and Potentates perished with him; but he had a great Party every where, some of which were so furiously enraged at his Fall, that they could not contain themselves from shewing their Indignation at those who were the Occasion of it.

And

And no Man could withstand them:] But they fled before them.

For the Fear of them fell upon all People.] When they heard that *Haman* had lost all his Authority and his Life, and that his Family was destroyed, and how *Mordecai* was in great Power (as it here follows) and the Queen herself was a *Jew*, no doubt it daunted all those who were disposed to execute the first Decree. And though some were so desperately envenomed against the *Jews*, that they did rise up to assault them, yet they had not such Courage as the *Jews* had to oppose them.

Ver. 3. *And all the Rulers of the Provinces, and the Lieutenants, and the Deputies, and Officers of the King, helped the Jews:]* Which was a great Advantage to them, and disheartened their Enemies, who hoped for their Assistance.

Because the Fear of Mordecai fell upon them.] They were Men of the Times (as we speak) and would have been as ready to execute *Haman's* Decree, if he had continued in Power, as to aid the *Jews* in this: Which it was their Interest to do, being afraid to be turned out of their Places by *Mordecai*, who was the chief Minister, if they did otherwise.

Ver. 4. *For Mordecai was great in the King's House,]* Having the Management of all the Queen's Affairs in the Court, where she was beloved of the King; who also (it appears by the foregoing Chapter, Ver. 15.) gave him the highest Authority in the Kingdom.

And his Fame went out throughout all the Provinces:] It is soon known every where, who is the Favourite at Court, which makes all Addresses to be paid to him.

For this Man Mordecai waxed greater and greater.] In the Esteem of the People, who not only stood in Awe of his Power, but highly applauded his Wisdom and Justice in the Management of all Affairs: For one cannot but think he was very eminent in those noble Qualities.

Ver. 5. *Thus the Jews smote all their Enemies with the Stroke of the Sword, and Slaughter, and Destruction,]* That is, they that had no Swords slew them with Clubs and Staves, and such like Weapons as they could procure; as the former *Targum* understands it.

And did what they would unto those that hated them.] Had them perfectly at their Mercy.

Ver. 6. *And in Shushan the Palace]* That is, in the City where the King's Palace was.

The Jews slew and destroyed five hundred Men.] It is commonly thought that these and the rest mentioned, Ver. 15, 16, were such as they knew were confederate with *Haman*, and perhaps *Amalekites* (as the latter *Targum* saith) for *Mordecai*, they think it is likely, required them to kill none but those who declared themselves forward to execute *Haman's* Decree. But I see no Ground for this: If Men were quiet, and did not rise up against them, they had no Authority to hurt them, much less to kill them. Therefore these five hundred, and the rest killed in other Places, were Men who could not conceal their wicked Inclinations, but openly

assaulted them; and such *Abasuerus* gave them Power to destroy, viii. 11. And Dr. *Alix* thinks the Conjecture of the *Targum* is right, that these five hundred Men were *Amalekites*, who followed the Fortune of *Haman*: And by their Slaughter were accomplished the Prophecies against *Amalek*. Some others, it is likely, joined with them; but they were the most enraged against the *Jews*, and the readiest to attempt their Destruction.

Ver. 7. *And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha,*

Ver. 8. *And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha,*

Ver. 9. *And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha,]* It is too curious an Observation of some of the *Jews*, that the Letter *Vau* before the last of these Names is larger than ordinary, to shew, that though this was the youngest Son of *Haman*, yet he was the most violent against the *Jews* of all the rest. Or, as others will have it (for such Conceits are endless) this being the Numeral Letter for the Number Six, it signifies this was the sixth Son of *Haman*, but placed last, out of Contempt, as the vilest of them all.

Ver. 10. *The ten Sons of Haman the Son of Hammedatha, the Enemy of the Jews, slew they;]* It is likely they were in the Head of the rest, who were so bold as to attempt the Destruction of the *Jews* in this City; being mad with Rage, and resolved to revenge their Father's Death; and rather perish than not execute his Design as far as they were able.

But on the Spoil laid they not their Hand.] The King had granted them Leave to make it, vii. 11. but they would not meddle with it, that they might not seem to desire any thing but their own Safety, and that the King might have the greater Kindness for them, into whose Exchequer these Goods were to come, if he pleased.

Ver. 11. *On that Day the Number of those that were slain in Shushan the Palace, was brought before the King.]* Who required an Account, that he might know how People stood affected towards the *Jews*.

Ver. 12. *And the King said unto Esther the Queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred Men in Shushan the Palace, and the ten Sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the King's Provinces?]* That was not yet known, but he thought in all likelihood they must have killed a great many more.

Now what is thy Petition? and it shall be granted thee: Or what is thy Request further? and it shall be done.] If this did not satisfy her, he asks her what she had to desire further, and he would not deny her.

Ver. 13. *Then said Esther, If it please the King, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan, to do to Morrow also according unto this Day's Decree,]* That is, kill as many of their Enemies as they could find; for some that appeared against them, perhaps escaped their Hands, whom they might meet withal the next Day.

And let Haman's ten Sons be hanged upon the Gallows.] By their Father, I suppose.

Ver.

Ver. 14. *And the King commanded it so to be done; and the Decree was given at Shushan,*] That both her Petition and Request should be granted. This was a new Decree, authorizing them to do on the fourteenth Day as they had on the thirteenth.

And they hanged Haman's ten Sons.] For their greater Infamy, that they might be exposed to publick Reproach, and their Bodies remain unburied, being left to rot upon the Gallows, or to be devoured by Crows and Vultures, and such like ravenous Creatures. For, though the Jews suffered none to hang on a Tree (so they called a Gallows) longer than till the Evening of the Day, whereon they were hanged; yet other Nations let them hang till they were there consumed; as appears from the Story of the Gibeonites, 2 Sam. xxi. 9, 10. and from the vulgar Saying among the Romans, *Pascere in Cruce Corvos*, to feed Ravens on a Gibbet.

Ver. 15. *For the Jews that were in Shushan, gathered themselves together on the fourteenth Day also of the Month Adar, and slew three hundred Men at Shushan; but on the Prey they laid not their Hand.*] The former Targum saith still, these three hundred Men were of the Family of Amalek. But whosoever they were, I take them to have been such as the Day before rose up against them, but in the Conflict escaped by Flight, and now were found out and killed.

Ver. 16. *But the other Jews that were in the King's Provinces, gathered themselves together, and stood for their Lives,*] This they did upon the thirteenth Day, when they defended themselves from those that rose up against them to destroy them.

And had Rest from their Enemies,] Who could not stand before them; but ceased to molest them.

And slew of their Foes seventy and five thousand;] There is some Reason to think these were Amalekites, as the former Targum saith: For, it is likely, many of that Nation might be dispersed throughout the King's Provinces as well as the Jews; and being the old Enemies of the Jews, might be very forward to help to destroy them. But whosoever they were, the Jews prevailed against them, and slew so many thousands, that thereby we may judge what a great Number of Jews still remained in other Countries, and did not return to their own.

But they laid not their Hands on the Prey.] It is likely Mordecai, in his Letters, had charged them not to make Use of the Liberty the King had given them to take the Spoil (viii. 11.) because they universally avoided it.

Ver. 17. *On the thirteenth Day of the Month Adar,*] This is to be referred to the foregoing Words; the Slaughter was made in the Provinces on the thirteenth Day of this Month, when they should have been destroyed themselves.

And on the fourteenth Day of the same, rested they, and made it a Day of Feasting and Gladness.] And so the Jews in the Provinces made the next Day a Festival of Rejoicing for their

great Deliverance. For there never was any Day of Joy and Gladness for any Blessing, without Feasting and liberal Entertainment of each other, and of the Poor.

Ver. 18. *But the Jews that were at Shushan, assembled together on the thirteenth Day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth Day of the same they rested, and made it a Day of Feasting and Gladness.*] The Jews indeed in the City of Shushan made the fifteenth Day a Festival, because they had Liberty to avenge themselves of their Enemies, not only on the thirteenth, but on the fourteenth, which were both Days of Slaughter; and therefore they rested not till the fifteenth Day.

Ver. 19. *Therefore the Jews of the Villages, that dwelt in the unwall'd Towns, made the fourteenth Day of the Month Adar, a Day of Gladness and Feasting, and a good Day, and of sending Portions one to another.*] This Verse gives an Account of the Reason of the different Observation of the Festival in Shushan, and in the Country Towns throughout the King's Provinces. There they had Leave only on one Day to slay their Enemies, which was the thirteenth of Adar; therefore the fourteenth was a Day of Gladness to them: Whereas in Shushan the fifteenth was the Day of Gladness, the fourteenth being by the King's Leave made like the thirteenth, another Day of Slaughter. But this was at the first done thus, only of their own free Accord; afterwards the Law established it otherwise.

A Day of Gladness and Feasting, and a good Day.] A Day of Thanksgiving and Praise to God, as well as of Feasting one with another, and of sending Portions to their Neighbours out of their good Cheer, that the meaner Sort might feast and rejoice also. And as to add to their Joy, they sent them Meat from their Tables; so the Jews have made a Constitution, that they should make a Collection of Money to send to the Poor at this Time of the Year, that they may provide themselves Things necessary to make a Feast. Which Money it is unlawful (as *Guilielmus Schickardus* observes) to apply to any other Use, but only the making themselves merry at this Time. See *Nehem.* viii. 10.

Ver. 20. *And Mordecai wrote these Things, and sent Letters unto all the Jews that were in all the Provinces of the King Abasuerus, both nigh and far,*] That which they had done at the first voluntarily, he thought good to turn into a Law; and sent it into the whole Realm.

Ver. 21. *To stablish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth Day of the Month Adar, and the fifteenth Day of the same yearly:*] But to make these more solemn Times, they now keep a Fast before the Feast (after the Example of *Esther*) on the thirteenth Day of the Month Adar.

Ver. 22. *As the Days wherein the Jews rested from their Enemies, and the Month which was turned unto them from Sorrow to Joy, and from Mourning into a good Day: That they should make them Days of Feasting and Joy, and of sending Portions one to another, and Gifts to the Poor.*] For

For in the Provinces they had done their Work before the fourteenth Day, and then rested and rejoiced; but in *Shushan* not before the fifteenth, and then they rejoiced there.

Ver. 23. *And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them.*] That is, to keep these Days as Festivals every where, throughout all Generations.

Ver. 24. *Because Haman the Son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur (that is, the Lot) to consume them, and to destroy them:*

Ver. 25. *But when Esther came before the King, he commanded by Letters, that his wicked Device which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own Head, and that he and his Sons should be hanged on the Gallows.*] These two Verses give an Account why this Festival was ordained, which they took Care should be understood by all Posterity, who observe it at this Day, and tell us it consists in these three Things; in Reading, in Rest from Labour, and in Feasting. The Reading begins in the Evening, as soon as the Stars appear, when the History of *Haman* is read from the Beginning to the End, out of a *Hebrew* Manuscript written on Parchment; for it is not lawful to read it out of a printed Bible, no more than they do the Law itself, as *Shickard* observes out of their Writers, who say, three Prayers go before this Reading: In the *First* of which, they praise God for counting them worthy to attend this divine Service. In the *Second*, they thank him for the miraculous Preservation of their Ancestors; and in the *Third*, that they have lived to observe another Festival in Memory of it. After this they go to Supper upon Spoon-Meats, and next Morning to the Synagogue, where the History is read over again with the same Ceremonies. After which they have done with Religion and Piety, and spend the two Days in Idleness, and Eating and Drinking. *Surenhusius* hath given a full Account of this Reading, and the Benedictions, in his *Notes* upon the *Megillah*, p. 387. And for their Rest and Feasting, they say in their Books, that the first is kept so sacredly, that they will not so much as set, or sow any Thing in their Garden on these Days; but play at Chefs, and such like Games, or spend the Time in Musick and Dancing, till it be Time to feast; and then they indulge themselves so far, that they think it not unlawful to drink so much, as not to be able to distinguish between the Blessing of *Mordecai* and the Curse of *Haman*, as they themselves speak. Inasmuch that our learned Primate *Usher* calls this Feast, *The Bacchanals of the Jews*.

Ver. 26. *Wherefore they called these Days Purim, after the Name of Pur:*] A *Persian* Word, signifying a Lot.

Therefore for all the Words of this Letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this Matter, and which had come unto them,] This seems to refer to the foregoing Words; wherefore they called these Days *Purim*, because of what

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was contained in the Letters of *Mordecai*; and because of what they had seen when these things fell out, and what they heard reported of them in the Places where they could not see them; but we take them to be the Reason of what follows, viz. of the keeping these Days.

Ver. 27. *The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their Seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them,*] All that should become Profelytes to their Religion.

So as it should not fail that they would keep these two Days according to their Writing, and according to their appointed Time every Year:] According as *Mordecai* had written, so they engaged without fail to keep these two Days, in the Time appointed; viz. on the fourteenth Day they kept the Festival in the Country all over the King's Dominions, and on the fifteenth they kept it in *Shushan*. The former of these the *Jews* now call in their Calendar the lesser Feast of *Purim*, and the latter the greater Feast.

Ver. 28. *And that these Days should be remembered, and kept throughout every Generation, every Family, every Province, and every City;*] Accordingly at this Day they keep this Festival, as they did in more ancient Times; for in the second Book of *Maccabees* xv. 37. we find, that *Judas* having obtained a great Victory over *Nicanor*, they ordained it should be commemorated upon the thirteenth of *Adar*, the Day before the Feast of *Mordecai*, which was this of *Purim*. This shews, that in those Days they kept this Deliverance in Memory by celebrating this Feast, and that the thirteenth of *Adar* was not then a Fast.

And that these Days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the Memorial of them perish from their Seed.] This is but a Repetition of what was said before, to make them more seriously attend to their Obligation, which was laid upon them all throughout all Generations. Accordingly now, as they tell us in their Books, the little Children, the Women, they that are base born, and Servants, &c. are bound to keep this Feast.

Ver. 29. *Then Esther the Queen, the Daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all Authority, to confirm this second Letter of Purim.*] These Days were first recommended to their Observation by the Authority of *Mordecai*, v. 20. But either they were neglected, or sometime intermitted, or were thought not to be sufficiently established; therefore the first Order was confirmed and ratified by a second, which was backed by the Authority of the Queen. And the Opinion of *Maimonides* is not improbable, that this was also an Ordinance of the Prophets, viz. *Haggai*, *Zachariah*, and others that lived in the Days of *Esther*. But this cannot be true, for they were dead long before this Time.

Ver. 30. *And he sent the Letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven Provinces of the Kingdom of Abasuerus,*] And consequently as far as *Jerusalem*; for *Syria* and *Judea* were among his Provinces, and the *Jews* should

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have

have been killed there, as well as in the rest of his Dominions; and were bound to thank God for their Preservation throughout all Ages, for otherwise they had not been any longer a People.

With Words of Peace and Truth:] Full of sincere Love and affectionate Desires of their Happiness. *Verbis amicis & sinceris.* Or, as others will have it, wishing their Prosperity, and exhorting them to live in Love and Peace, and to be faithful in their Religion; and particularly in keeping their Promise of observing these Days. But after all, *Conradus Pellicanus* seems to me to have guessed the best at the Meaning of these Words, *Peace and Truth*; which he thinks were the Salutation on the Top of the Letter.

Ver. 31. *To confirm these Days of Purim in their Times appointed, according as Mordecai the Jew, and Esther the Queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their Seed, the Matters of the Fastings and their Cry.]* Some learned Men understand these Words as if they meant, that these Days of *Purim* were therefore appointed, that they might be a Memorial of that Deliverance, which was obtained of God, by Fastings and Prayers unto him; which, if it be admitted, gives no Ground to conclude from thence, that they observed a Fast upon this Occasion, as well as a Feast. The *Jews* indeed think quite otherwise; and if we may believe their *Calendar*, have ever since kept a Fast on the thirteenth of *Adar*, which was the Day appointed for their Extirpation. Upon the Hearing of which Decree, all Places were filled with doleful Lamentations, there being no Help for them if God did not deliver them; unto whom therefore they cried with Fasting and Prayer. In Memory of which they undertook to keep a yearly Fast, as well as Days of Feasting and Gladness, which immediately ensued. But their *Calendar* is a new Piece, and of no Credit at all, nor do we find the least Indication that *Esther*, or *Mordecai* enjoined any Thing but a Feast, no mention being made of a Fast in their Decree. And therefore it was voluntarily undertaken by the *Jews* themselves in After-Ages, as this Verse seems to import. Which the former *Targum* thus paraphrases (and the latter to the same Purpose) *To confirm these Days of Purim, as Mordecai the Jew, and Esther the Queen appointed concerning them: And as the Jews ordained for themselves, and for their Posterity, to keep in Memory the Matter of their Fastings and their Prayers.*

Ver. 32. *And the Decree of Esther confirmed these Matters of Purim, and it was written in the Book.]* Either she made a new Decree by her sole Authority to enforce the former; or the Meaning is, that she commanded the forementioned Decree, which confirmed the Days of *Purim*, to be recorded and made a publick Act, in a Book where perhaps this whole History was contained: Which Record testified in Time to come, what passed in her Days; viz. their Danger, and their wonderful Deliverance, and the Decree of

Esther concerning the Observation of these Days.

C H A P. X.

Ver. 1. *AND the King Abasuerus laid a Tribute upon the Land, and upon the Isles of the Sea.]* Having great Occasion for Money, he laid a new Tax upon all his Provinces, both in the Continent (as we speak) and in the Isles of the Sea, belonging to his Dominions. Some think, that the Imposts which he released to his People at the Marriage of *Esther* (ii. 18.) which continued for some Years, were now revived, and that this is all which is meant by these Words. But this doth not well agree with this Phrase, of *laying a Tribute* on them. Our *Primate Usher* understands by the *Isles* here mentioned, those in the *Ægean Sea*, which were conquered by *Darius Hystaspis*, who was the first that laid a Tribute on his Subjects; for *Cyrus* and *Cambyses* before him laid none; but being begun, they continued it to the Reign of this King, *ad Annum Per. Julian. 4219.* *Strabo* saith (Lib. xv. p. 735.) that the Tribute exacted on the Sea-coast was paid in Silver; but that from the Land, in such Commodities as every Country afforded, in Wool, Drugs, Cattle, &c.

Ver. 2. *And all the Acts of his Power, and of his Might,]* Which was so great, that the *Egyptians* in their *Hieroglyphicks* represented *Oschus* by a Sword. And *Plutarch* (as *Jacobus Capellus* observes) calls him the most terrible of all the *Persian Kings*.

And the Declaration of the Greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the King advanced him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia?] These Words signify, that as this King did great Things, so they were to be ascribed very much to the Management of *Mordecai*, after he was advanced to the highest Authority in the Kingdom. But it was not the Design of the Author of this History, to relate such Things; for which he refers to the publick Records of the Kingdom, which were kept in some Part of the King's House (it appears from vi. 1.) and were extant in those Days, when this Book was written.

Ver. 3. *For Mordecai the Jew was next unto King Abasuerus,]* I cannot but observe here, in the Conclusion of this Book, that *Mordecai* is so often called *the Jew* by this Author (see ix. 29, 31.) that it hath inclined me to think it was not written by one of that Nation, but by some Profelyte of *Persia* who was converted, as many were at this Time (viii. 17.) to the *Jewish Religion*. Some of which might be in these Times divinely inspired, as *Nicholas* a Profelyte of *Antioch* was in the Apostles Days, *Acts* vi. 5. But I have no Authority for this, which I mention as a meer Conjecture.

And great among the Jews, and accepted of the Multitude of his Brethren,] His Greatness did not make him forget his Brethren; by whom he was highly esteemed, and much honoured by every one of them.

Seeking the Wealth of his People,] And no Wonder he was so acceptable, for his Study was how to do them good.

And speaking Peace to all his Seed.] Advising and promoting whatsoever was for their Advantage; and speaking still to the King for that which might tend to the Happiness and Prosperity of his Nation, which he advanced to the utmost of his Power. Unto which a most earnest Desire of the Coming of the MESSIAH contributed exceedingly, and the serious Study of the Law, which he recommended to them, as the only Means of living happily. Thus *Conradus Pellicanus* concludes his *Commentary* on this Book; but where he found this I cannot

tell. It is only highly probable, that so good a Man as *Mordecai*, was very solicitous they should be obedient to the Law of *Moses* (as *Malachi* was) and live in Expectation of the MESSIAH, concerning whom *Moses* prophesied. For as *Epiphanius*, and *Seder Olam*, and others observe, this Book of *Esther* is the last Canonical Book of the *Old Testament*; and the nearer they approached to the Coming of *Christ*, the more desirous holy Men were to see him. Others indeed think *Malachi* is the last divine Writer; but on the other Side, it seems probable, that he having taken no Notice of the Deliverance under *Esther*, prophesied some Time before it.



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